

THE FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
ASHEVILLE, N. C.

1794-1951

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The First Presbyterian Church in 1951

THE FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
ASHEVILLE, N. C.

1794-1951

by
George W. McCoy

Published 1951 by
THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

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The Rev. Calvin Grier Davis, D. D.	1938-
The Rev. Leland N. Edmunds was assistant pastor, 1929-1933.	

ASSISTANTS TO THE PASTOR

Mrs. John T. Dunlop	1913-1923
Randolph Keith Axson	1922-1928; 1934-1939
Miss Gertrude W. White	1924-1926

CHURCH VISITOR

Miss Cornelia Withers Wilds	1926-
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DIRECTORS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Miss Mary Lillian Fairly	1939-1941
Miss Frances Ogden	1944-1945
Miss Ora Blackmun	1945-1947
Miss Jessie Newbold	1947-1950
Miss Jeannie Ogilvie	1950-

* *Inclusive of pastors, stated supplies, and temporary supplies sent by the Presbytery.*

Acknowledgments

For assistance in the preparation of this story of the First Presbyterian Church thanks are due the following:

Robert F. Campbell, Jr., Bernard R. Smith, Jr., and Miss Margaret Ligon, church history committee members who aided the chairman in gathering materials; the family of the late Dr. Robert F. Campbell, for access to his six large scrapbooks; Dr. Calvin Grier Davis, R. R. Williams, Sr., George H. Wright, Sr., Dr. R. E. McClure, C. R. Sumner, Theodore D. Morrison, Jr., and W. Harrill Wood, all of Asheville, Dr. T. A. Painter of East Gadsden, Ala., Mrs. James D. McDowell of York, S. C., Mrs. W. L. DePass of Manhasset, N. Y., Dr. E. G. Gammon of Hampden-Sydney, Va., and E. S. Tennent of Spartanburg, S. C., for helpfulness in various ways; Miss Myra Champion of Pack Memorial Library and Miss Ida Padelford of Sondley Reference Library, Asheville; the Asheville Citizen-Times Company; and Dr. T. H. Spence, Jr., director of the Historical Foundation of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches, Montreat, North Carolina.

CHAPTER I

The Coming of The Scotch-Irish

The story of the First Presbyterian Church and of Presbyterianism in Asheville begins with the coming of the Scotch-Irish through the passes of the Blue Ridge.

The land now occupied by the City of Asheville and Buncombe County was part of a vast mountain wilderness before the Revolutionary War. Virgin forests covered the area, unbroken except by rivers and paths made by Indians and animals.

The home of the Cherokee Indians—the first mountaineers of the South—was west of the Blue Ridge escarpment. Here they had lived for centuries. Then came events of the 18th century that were to change their way of life.

From early in the 18th century to the outbreak of the Revolution, there was a great tide of immigration to America. Scotch-Irish, French Huguenots and others came by the thousands. The great majority of the Scotch-Irish settled in New Jersey and Pennsylvania and many streamed south into the Valley of Virginia and into North Carolina. Others went to Charleston, S. C., and flowed north. The two streams of settlers met in the Piedmont region of the Carolinas and spread out from there.

These people — the Scotch-Irish, who became the backbone of Presbyterianism in the South and in America—were different from the planters of the seaboard region who for the most part adhered to the Church of England. The Scotch-Irish Presbyterians were inspired by a strong desire for political freedom, and they played important roles in the American Revolution, having a large share in the sentiments and movements which led to the Declaration of Independence and the framing of the Constitution of the United States. They were also inspired by a determination to have religious freedom. They wanted to interpret the Bible for themselves, believing in the sov-

ereignty of God, predestination, salvation by grace, the final perseverance of the saints, and in representative church government. Their services were marked by reverence, dignity and simplicity.

The year 1789 marked the beginnings of the Federal Government of the United States and of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. Both, of course, had their origins in events preceding that year. The Presbyterian General Assembly, which held its organization meeting in Philadelphia in 1789, was antedated by the formation of presbyteries and synods. In 1755 the Synod of New York formed the Presbytery of Hanover which, generally, embraced the entire southern territory, including North Carolina.

When the Presbytery of Orange was organized on September 5, 1770, at Hawfields Church in Orange County, North Carolina, there were from 40 to 50 Presbyterian churches in North Carolina, with about 2,000 members. The territory embraced by Orange Presbytery, as it was first organized, extended south and west from the Virginia boundary, but for practical purposes it was confined to that part of North Carolina east of the Blue Ridge and to upper South Carolina. There were no Presbyterians west of the Blue Ridge in North Carolina. White settlements were not established here until after the Revolution.

In 1783 the State of North Carolina opened to entry and grant an area west of the Blue Ridge to as far as Big Pigeon River. Pursuant to this, white settlers pushed westward from the Piedmont. In the latter part of 1784, Samuel Davidson, his wife, an infant daughter and a woman servant crossed the Blue Ridge, going from Catawba River to Swannanoa River and settling on Christian Creek at the foot of Jones Mountain. There he built a cabin, and became the first settler in what is now Buncombe County. It was not long before misfortune struck. Davidson was killed by Indians and the family fled to Old Fort.

A few months later — in 1785 — relatives and friends of Samuel Davidson left the settlements on Catawba River, crossed the Blue Ridge to the Swannanoa and formed what became known as the Swannanoa Settlements around the mouth of Bee Tree Creek. This

was the first permanent white settlement in North Carolina southwest of the Blue Ridge.

These pioneer Scotch-Irish Presbyterians on the Swannanoa had come from the vicinity of Centre Church, built in 1764 between the Yadkin and Catawba Rivers. They felt the need of continuing their religious services and worship. They, therefore, established a meeting-house "about one-half mile to the east" of what was known later as Piney Grove Presbyterian Church, and now as the Swannanoa Presbyterian Church. This pioneer church was known as Robert Patton's Meeting-house. (Dr. F. A. Sondley's History of Buncombe County, page 702)

There seems to be no record to show any early connection between Robert Patton's Meeting-house and a presbytery. Doubtless the difficulties of transportation, communications, and pioneer conditions were not conducive to an early relationship. Then, too, the synods and presbyteries covered vast areas, sparsely populated for the most part, and they were undergoing adjustments and changes.

In 1784, the year the ill-fated Samuel Davidson came to Swannanoa Valley, the boundaries of the presbyteries were adjusted. In that year, the Presbytery of South Carolina was set off from Orange Presbytery by the Synod of New York and Philadelphia; and in 1786, when the Swannanoa Settlements were but one year old, the Presbytery of Abingdon was constituted. Its territory was largely in Tennessee, but it embraced a portion of North Carolina, including the Swannanoa Settlements.

The Synod of the Carolinas was erected in 1788. It was composed of the Presbyteries of Orange, South Carolina, and Abingdon. In that year, too, the Synod of New York and Philadelphia was dissolved and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America was formed, with four synods and 16 presbyteries. The synods were those of Philadelphia, New York and New Jersey, Virginia, and the Carolinas.

During the existence of the Synod of the Carolinas, from 1788 to 1813, efforts were made to extend the Gospel into remote regions of North Carolina and into Tennessee and Mississippi. Missionaries on horseback journeyed to distant places.

CHAPTER II

The Rev. George Newton

Following the settlement at the mouth of Bee Tree Creek, other settlers came and pushed the frontier westward, down the Swannanoa to the French Broad River, up and down the latter stream, and on to Reems and Hominy Creeks. Within a few years, the population was sufficient for the formation of a new county, and Buncombe was created by an act of the Legislature on January 14, 1792. The county was organized on April 16, 1792, at the home of Col. William Davidson, a place called Gum Spring near the mouth of Swannanoa River.

Two years later, in 1794, John Burton obtained state grants and planned and marked out a number of lots for a community called Morristown, but which became Asheville when it was incorporated by act of the Legislature in November, 1797. It began its existence as a municipal corporation on January 27, 1798.

As the settlements increased, the need for both church and school was felt by the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, the group which, up to the close of the 18th century, had played such a major part in the historical development of North Carolina.

Moved by the desire of the people and influenced by the academy movement that flourished in North Carolina in the latter third of the 18th century, an academy was established — prior to 1793 — near the mouth of Swannanoa River on land owned by William Forster, "the second of the name," and within the boundaries of the grant made by the State of North Carolina to William and James Davidson in 1787. It was in this one-room log building that Robert Henry, Revolutionary War soldier, and, later, a surveyor and attorney, taught school, the first west of the Blue Ridge in the present North Carolina. (Sondley's History, page 703)

This schoolhouse occupied a beautiful oak and pine covered knoll half a mile north of Swannanoa River. It was at first called Union Hill and then Union Hill Academy.

In 1797, Robert Henry was succeeded by the Rev. George Newton, a Presbyterian minister, who came from Rutherford County and served as both teacher and preacher. The curriculum was based on the "three R's"; but the Academy, like those springing up elsewhere, did not neglect the more profound subjects of Greek and Latin, mathematics, and the English language. Birch switches helped maintain discipline. Pens were made of goose quills and ink from pokeberries.

The log schoolhouse at Union Hill was not only the first school west of the Blue Ridge in the present North Carolina, but it was the first church within the boundaries of the present city of Asheville. For more than a century after its construction, however, the site was outside of Asheville's limits.

This raises the questions: How early was there a church in what is now the city of Asheville? Was it an organized Presbyterian church?

The records are not complete. Those that are extant are not clear on some points.

The Rev. W. N. Morrison, who served the Swannanoa Presbyterian Church from 1840 to 1852, prepared an article in 1876 that throws indirect light on the subject. Published February 19, 1879, in the North Carolina Presbyterian, it said, in part:

"The first preaching of which the writer can gain any knowledge was done by Rev. Dr. Hall of Iredell and Rev. Mr. Kilpatrick of Rowan. These gentlemen met (whether by previous agreement or providentially is not known) in this" (Swannanoa) "valley in the year 1794, and held their meeting of several days continuance on the banks of a little stream called Bee Tree, and under the shade of the beech which grew thereon. Here they held their meeting because no better accommodation could be secured. This precise spot is now pointed out to the inquirer by two old members of the church yet living, and lies about one mile west of the present house of worship and to the south side of the public road, still used to some extent in passing to Asheville."

Who were these traveling missionaries referred to by Mr. Morrison in his article as the Rev. Dr. Hall of Iredell and the Rev. Mr. Kilpatrick of Rowan? The information is in the Rev. William Henry Foote's "Sketches of North Carolina," published in 1846.

Dr. Hall was the Rev. James Hall, D. D., and Mr. Kilpatrick was the Rev. Joseph D. Kilpatrick.

Dr. Hall, one of the most distinguished ministers of his day, was born in Carlisle, Pa., August 22, 1744, reared in North Carolina and educated at Princeton. During the Revolutionary War he was a patriot captain of cavalry and an army chaplain. On one occasion during the war he preached to about 4,000 soldiers in the Cherokee country of Georgia. "In honor of that first gospel sermon in the Indian territories, the adjacent country was named after the chaplain, Hall County . . .", which Sidney Lanier immortalized in his "Song of the Chattahoochee":

"Out of the hills of Habersham,
Down the valleys of Hall."

On April 8, 1778, Dr. Hall became pastor of the united congregations of Fourth Creek, Concord and Bethany churches in the Statesville area of Iredell County and served all three until 1790 when, "wishing to devote more time to the cause of domestic missions than could be consistent with so large a charge, he was released from his connection with Fourth Creek and Concord," but continued with Bethany until his death on July 25, 1826.

In 1793 Dr. Hall "commenced his missionary excursions" under the direction of a commission of the Synod of the Carolinas. "Besides a great many short excursions nearer home, he performed fourteen long and toilsome missions," including one to the lower Mississippi Valley.

Mr. Kilpatrick, younger than Dr. Hall, was ordained by the Presbytery of Orange in 1793 and is listed as having served as pastor of Third Creek Church in Rowan County.

It appears from Mr. Morrison's article that Dr. Hall and Mr. Kilpatrick journeyed to Swannanoa valley in 1794 and held a series of meetings at a place on Bee Tree Creek. This was but nine years after the beginning of the Swannanoa Settlements and it is more than like-

ly that many of those who heard Dr. Hall preach in the grove of beech trees were old friends who had come to the mountains from the vicinity of his charges in Iredell County.

It may be assumed that, once in the mountains, Dr. Hall and Mr. Kilpatrick did not confine their preaching to one point, but visited and preached at other places, including the settlement at the mouth of Swannanoa.

Did these two missionaries stir so much interest that the settlers organized Presbyterian congregations? And did the two missionaries report to the Synod or Presbytery that congregations had been formed by the settlers in the mountains? The records do not show, but they do establish certain facts which may be directly related to the foregoing.

In a table dated May 24, 1797, in the Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, the 39 congregations within the bounds of Abingdon Presbytery included the following:

“Rim’s Creek Congregation

“Mouth of Swannano

“Head of F. Broad.”

Both the Reems Creek and Mouth of Swannanoa congregations were listed as being on the Swannanoa water course, with the Head of French Broad congregation being on the French Broad River. At each place, the “present number of families” is listed as 35 and each is credited in “ability in dollars” at 100. The “time of formation” of each of the three congregations is listed as 1794 and the “present state” of each (in 1797) is “vacant,” apparently referring to there being no pastor for the congregations.

It is to be noted that the Reems Creek congregation was listed as being on the Swannanoa water course. This is in error, for Reems Creek flows into the French Broad River.

What conclusions may be drawn from these records? They show that the congregation at the “Mouth of Swannano” was formed in 1794. This, to interpret the designation literally, was within the present boundaries of the city of Asheville. Whether or not the “time of formation” means it was an organized Presbyterian church

in 1794, the General Assembly gave recognition to it by listing it in its minutes. Thus it appears there was a Presbyterian church within the boundaries of the present city of Asheville as early as 1794.

It is noted, also, that the Minutes of the General Assembly for 1797 carry another entry that refers to the churches in Buncombe County. Under the churches of Concord Presbytery, there is this entry:

“Vacancies able to support a minister— . . . Swannanoa, Hems Creek, and Buncombe.”

Why was there a variation in the listing of the names? It was due probably to the fact that the two entries for 1797 came from two different sources — one from Abingdon Presbytery and the other from Concord Presbytery. The Buncombe County territory appears to have been transferred from the Presbytery of Abingdon to that of Concord in the latter part of 1797, since it appears in the Abingdon list in the Minutes of the General Assembly of 1797 and was evidently in Concord in early 1798.

Under this second entry, there is evidently a distinction between Swannanoa and Buncombe. It may be assumed that the Swannanoa vacancy referred to the area where the Swannanoa settlements were first made, and that the Buncombe reference was to the Asheville area. Asheville, it will be recalled, was not so named officially until November, 1797. Before that date and even for some years afterwards it was often referred to as Buncombe Courthouse. It would appear, therefore, that the Concord listing supports the view that there was a Presbyterian congregation at the Mouth of Swannanoa within the boundaries of the present city of Asheville.

There seems to be no record to show how the congregation at the Mouth of Swannanoa was served from the “time of formation” in 1794 until 1797. Formation of the congregation was, doubtless, due to the initiative of the settlers themselves and it is probable it was served from time to time by traveling missionaries sent out by the Synod of the Carolinas to the vacant churches in the western territory. The 1797 minutes of the General Assembly show there was no pastor at the Mouth of Swannanoa when the report was made that year. Later in that year, however, the Rev. George Newton assumed his

duties as head of Union Hill Academy and began his ministry to the Mouth of Swannanoa congregation, which used the schoolhouse as its place of worship.

At that time Newton was a licentiate, that fact having been reported to the General Assembly of 1797 by the Presbytery of Concord which had been established at a meeting of the Synod of the Carolinas on October 1, 1795. The Presbytery of Concord was erected by a division of the Presbytery of Orange, with the Yadkin River being the dividing line, and the apparent addition in 1797 of that portion of Abingdon Presbytery which included the settlements along the Swannanoa and French Broad Rivers.

The records of the Presbytery of Concord for March 28-29, 1798, show that "A call for the ministerial labors of Mr. George Newton from the united congregations of Swannanoa and Rim's Creek was brought in and read, which he accepted. Whereupon ordered that Rev. Messrs. Humphrey Hunter, John M. Wilson, Samuel Davies and John Andrews attend at Swannanoa to hold an intermediate presbytery for the ordination of Mr. Newton on the second Wednesday of August next, that Mr. Hunter preach a sermon on the occasion, and Mr. Wilson preside and give the charge. Mr. Newton was ordered to prepare a sermon on Eph. II:1, and a lecture on 2 Peter III:1-9, and prepare for a standing examination on church history, church government, and chronology." The Presbytery of Concord, meeting on October 10, 1798, made this record: "It appears from the intermediate presbytery at Swannanoa that Mr. George Newton was set apart to the whole of the Gospel ministry, and being present took his seat, with his Elder, Mr. James Davidson." At the meeting of the synod on October 18, 1798, the Presbytery of Concord reported that Newton had been ordained.

Newton remained in the Presbytery of Concord during his residence in Buncombe County except for a four-year period when he was in the short-lived Presbytery of Greenville. The Minutes of the Synod of the Carolinas show that on October 2, 1800, on petition, the Presbytery of Greenville was set off "to consist of Rev. Messrs. George Newton, Samuel Davies, Hezekiah Balch, and John Cossan, to meet at Swannanoa church, on the third Tuesday of November

next, and Mr. Newton to preside and preach" On October 4, 1804, "by request of members the Presbytery of Greenville was dissolved; and the Rev. George Newton and Samuel Davies were directed to apply to the Presbytery of Concord for admission."

D. K. Bennett, in his "Chronology of North Carolina," published in 1858, said that "no one of the earlier citizens of Buncombe is entitled to more grateful remembrance than the Rev. George Newton, the first Presbyterian minister who settled on the western side of the Blue Ridge."

Newton, who was born in Pennsylvania about the year 1765, came to North Carolina early in life and was educated in this state. His work as teacher and preacher at Union Hill Academy, which was renamed Newton Academy in his honor, was distinguished and he became widely known. Dr. Sondley said it is probable that Newton, about the beginning of the 19th century, bestowed the name of Mount Pisgah on the peak that dominates the skyline to the southwest of Asheville. The name apparently was suggested by the Biblical Mt. Pisgah from which Moses saw the Promised Land.

During Newton's 17 years at the academy, students came from the various communities, and on Sundays people came from miles around to hear his sermons, hitching their horses in the near-by woods. Some walked for miles to attend the services, traveling the forest trails that converged at the House of God. As teacher and preacher, Newton was a pioneer in Christian education. Among those who studied under him were: David Lowry Swain, first native lawyer of Buncombe County, who became governor of North Carolina and president of the University of North Carolina; B. F. Perry, who became governor of South Carolina; Waddy Thompson, of South Carolina, who served as a member of the Congress and as U. S. minister to Mexico; General Robert B. Vance; Montraville Patton, legislator, merchant, and influential citizen; and James W. Patton, merchant and for many years chairman of the County Court of Buncombe.

Asheville in 1800 was a new and small mountain village, and the settlement near the mouth of the Swannanoa was two miles to the south.

On July 11, 1803, William Forster, Jr., "the third of the name," conveyed, as a gift, a tract of eight acres to a group of trustees "for the further maintenance and support of the Gospel, and teaching a Latin and English school or either as may be thought most proper from time to time . . . by the trustees, or a majority of them, or their successors in office." It also provided "for a place of residence for a preacher of the Gospel." The land conveyed included "an old schoolhouse with a new one, and a framed dwelling house, a spring, etc." The trustees, among whom the grantor included himself, were Andrew Erwin, Daniel Smith, John Patton, Edmond Sams, James Blakely, William Forster, Sr., Thomas Forster, Jr., William Whitson, William Gudger, Samuel Murray, Joseph Henry, David Vance, William Brittain, George Davidson, John Davidson of Hominy, and the Rev. George Newton.

A provision in the deed of conveyance provided "there shall at all times be eleven trustees in the neighborhood of said institution who live convenient enough to send their children to said school or schools from their own dwelling houses and two from the Rev. George Newton's present congregation on Cain (Cane) Creek and two from his present congregation on the waters of Sims (Reems) Creek and one from his present congregation in the neighborhood of Robert Patton's Meeting-house, and one from the neighborhood of the mouth of Hominy who shall be appointed and approved of from time to time."

On November 15, 1809, the same William Forster, Jr., (born October 27, 1776—died May 2, 1826) conveyed three and one-fourth acres, adjoining the eight-acre tract on the south, "including the brick house now building to Andrew Erwin, Daniel Smith, John Patton, Edmond Sams, George Swain, William Forster, Sr., Benjamin Hawkins, Thomas Forster, Jr., James Patton, William Gudger, Sr., David Vance, William Brittain, Samuel Murray, Sr., John McLane, William Moore, Sr., Samuel Davidson, and the Rev. George Newton, trustees of the Union Hill Academy, established by an act of Assembly as a seminary of learning" in 1805.

The log house, by 1809, had been removed and a brick building erected. In that year, also, an act of the General Assembly changed the name to Newton Academy in honor of the Rev. George Newton.

The Raleigh Star published the following account sent from Asheville on July 7, 1809:

"The anniversary of our glorious Independence was pleasingly celebrated in this little village on Tuesday last. Here was no bombastic display of warlike ardour — no mock feats of chivalry — no firing of guns — no splendid feasting — no Bacchanalian libations — and consequently no pestiferous or baneful practice of assassinating characters with impunity and fomenting party strife.

"At about 11 o'clock in the forenoon the students of the Union Hill Academy (under the tuition of the Rev. George Newton) marched into town in handsome order, followed by their teacher and the trustees of this seminary, and had an exhibition at the house of Maj. Andrew Erwin, where a stage had been previously erected. The scene was beautiful; about 40 of the students neatly clad in homespun garbs, exhibited various characters on the stage — while the expressive countenances of several hundreds of spectators bore testimony that their performances were such as did honour to themselves and their Preceptor."

The following year, 1810, persons interested in the "literary advancement" of Newton Academy undertook an enterprise that became famous in the history of Western North Carolina. In an advertisement in The Raleigh Register on February 22, 1810, David Vance, George Swain, John Patton, George Newton and Andrew Erwin, managers, said, under the heading "Literary Advancement," that \$7,000 may be gained for the small sum of \$4 in the Newton Academy Lottery. The lottery, they said, "is authorized by an act of the Legislature of North Carolina, for the purpose of enabling the trustees" of Newton Academy near the town of Asheville to complete necessary buildings and "to establish a female academy" in Asheville. This project met with failure. On January 24, 1812, the same managers advertised in The Raleigh Star that "owing to the extreme scarcity of cash, they are induced to believe that a sufficient number of tickets, to justify the commencement of drawing in a reasonable time cannot be sold." The sale of tickets was discontinued and the money refunded.

CHAPTER III

Early Struggles

The early start of the Presbyterians in the Asheville area was gained in the face of hardships imposed by pioneer conditions, and while the denomination itself was facing difficulties elsewhere.

Dr. Walter L. Lingle, in his book, "Presbyterians: Their History and Beliefs," said that in the latter half of the 18th century a spiritual deadness seemed to settle down upon the country.

The Presbytery of Concord, at its session at Unity Church on September 30, 1800, with the Rev. George Newton serving as moderator, took note of general conditions, and took steps looking toward their correction. In a petition addressed to the County Court of Buncombe the Presbytery "humbly sheweth that . . . many gross immoralities daily abound among the citizens of our state, of which intemperance in the use of ardent spirits, profane swearing, breach of the holy Sabbath are none of the least, as those crimes with many others strike against our political happiness, as well as incur the displeasure of God." The petition then requested that the laws for the suppression of such crimes "be carried into vigorous execution," for "good order . . . is essential to the happiness both of civil and religious societies." Acting upon this petition, the Court, at its January term, 1801, resolved to "exert ourselves in suppressing such enormous practices and carrying the laws into vigorous execution against every offender."

Facing the country-wide condition of spiritual deadness, the Presbyterian Church, in 1801, entered into a plan of cooperative union with the Congregational Church with a view to doing more effective home mission work among the growing population in what was then the western part of the United States. Under this plan a Congregational minister could become the pastor of a Presbyterian church and

have a seat in Presbyterian Church courts. Conversely, a Presbyterian minister could become the pastor of a Congregational church.

While the Presbyterian denomination was working out this plan of cooperative union, its pioneer members in Western North Carolina were beginning to be confronted by strong competition from Methodists and Baptists, aided to a considerable extent by the Great Revival that swept the country in the first three years of the 19th century.

In 1800, Francis Asbury, Methodist bishop, began to include the French Broad valley in his annual tours. He and the Rev. George Newton became friends, and entries in his Journal throw light on the Presbyterian minister and his qualities as well as on conditions in Western North Carolina.

At Buncombe Courthouse (Asheville) on Tuesday, November 11, 1800, Bishop Asbury preached to an audience of 80 persons, "among them Mr. Newton, a Presbyterian minister, who made the concluding prayer."

On Sunday, November 7, 1802, the entry in the Journal included: "I was happy that in the space of two years, God has manifested His goodness and His power in the hearts of many upon the solitary banks and isolated glades of (the) French Broad; some subjects of grace there were before, amongst Methodists, Presbyterians and Baptists."

October 26, 1803 — "In our route" (across the Swannanoa and French Broad Rivers) "we passed two large encamping places of the Methodists and Presbyterians; it made the country look like the Holy Land."

In October, 1805 — "On Wednesday I breakfasted with Mr. Newton, Presbyterian minister, a man after my own mind: we took sweet counsel together."

On Sunday, October 18, 1807 — "I spent a night under the roof of my very dear brother in Christ, George Newton, Presbyterian minister, an Israelite indeed."

On December 2, 1810 — The bishop, with Henry Boehm, visited Newton Academy where both of them preached. "Mr. Newton in exhortation confirmed what was said We dined with Mr. Newton: He is almost a Methodist, and reminds me of dear Whatcoat — the same placidness and solemnity."

The "encamping places" referred to by Bishop Asbury in 1803 were an outgrowth of the Great Revival. The camp meetings, usually lasting a week, were held from July to October and were periods of great excitement and social occasions.

Bishop Asbury's early journeys in this wild mountain country in the cause of Methodism were followed by Methodist circuit riders. Itinerant Baptist preachers also were active. The Methodists were so earnest and aggressive that they swept many Presbyterians into their fold and many of their descendants — the Alexanders, Davidsons, Weavers and others — are still staunch Methodists. The Baptists, too, received many mountain folk into their membership and, as a result, Methodists and Baptists became numerically the strongest denominations in Western North Carolina, in both urban and rural areas. The Presbyterians, while emphasizing home missions, developed their churches largely in the towns and more populous areas.

The Rev. D. I. Craig, in his book, "A History of the Development of the Presbyterian Church in North Carolina and of Synodical Home Missions," published in 1907, said that from the time of the Great Revival, from 1800 to 1803, there was a period of 20 to 30 years in which there seemed to be no general religious awakening. Opportunities for expansion, development and growth of the Presbyterian Church were neglected and lost.

Newton, as parson and pedagogue, remained at Newton Academy until the autumn of 1814 when, nearly 50 years of age, he migrated to Bedford County, Tennessee, where he lived the last 27 years of his useful life, serving for many years as principal of Dickson Academy and pastor of the Presbyterian church in Shelbyville. He died at the age of 76, about the year 1841. "For more than 55 years he was a constant and faithful sentinel on the watchtower of Zion" "Grace was his favorite theme through life."

Newton had special talents both as a preacher and as an educator. He was devoted to his high calling as a minister, was known for his piety, and "much of his time was spent between the porch and the altar." Exemplary in his life, conversation and conduct, he cultivated the spirit of peace and brotherly love.

As an educator, he must have been an inspiring teacher, judging from the number of his pupils who gained success and prominence in later life, and who remembered him with gratitude and affection. He studied, with solicitude, the best interests of his pupils.

In social circles, he was described as being plain and unaffected, yet in the highest degree dignified, affable and polite.

All the evidence points to the fact that Newton was unusually well qualified to serve as the pioneer minister and teacher in the mountain field — a work that required courage, initiative, enterprise, and devotion to the causes he served.

CHAPTER IV

Period of Transition

After Newton concluded his teaching and ministerial duties in Asheville in 1814, this church field apparently was vacant until 1817. During this period, the Rev. Francis H. Porter, by direction of the General Assembly, labored as a missionary in Concord Presbytery, serving in Buncombe, Rutherford and Haywood Counties in 1814 and 1815. He had been examined and received as a candidate by Concord Presbytery on April 2, 1811.

In 1817, Porter was called to serve as pastor. Minutes of Concord Presbytery show the following facts: At a meeting of the Presbytery on April 1, 1817, "A call was introduced from Asheville and Rims Creek for the ministerial labors of Mr. Francis H. Porter." He accepted the call and began his duties on August 22.

In 1817, the year Porter came to serve Asheville and Reems Creek, a son was born in Asheville to Porter and his wife, Mrs. Isabella Kilpatrick Porter. The son, the Rev. Abner A. Porter, D. D., was one of four brothers who were ministers in the Presbyterian Church.

The Asheville native served as editor of the Southern Presbyterian, Columbia, S. C., from 1861 to 1864, and also held pastorates of churches in Selma, Ala., Spartanburg, S. C., and Austin, Texas.

The Rev. Francis H. Porter continued in the Asheville-Reems Creek field until September 2, 1823, serving also, during that time, as head of Newton Academy.

It appears from the records that Mr. Porter met with difficulty in resigning his charge. At Steele Creek on April 3, 1823, he applied to the Presbytery "for leave to resign his pastoral charge of the congregations of Asheville, Swananoa and Rimm's Creek." No representative being present to signify consent, it was "ordered that a citation be issued requiring the congregations to appear by their representa-

tive or otherwise to show cause why Mr. Porter shall not be released from his pastoral charges."

At the meeting of the Presbytery at Lincolnton on September 2, 1823, Mr. Porter renewed his application. No representative appeared, however, and no communication had been received by the Presbytery. It was therefore presumed that the congregations acquiesced and the Presbytery released Mr. Porter from the pastoral charge and the congregations of "Asheville, Swannanoa and Rimm's Creek" were declared vacant.

On April 6, 1824, Concord Presbytery, upon Mr. Porter's request, "dismissed and recommended" him to "the brethren of South Carolina Presbytery as a member in fair and regular standing." He joined the Presbytery of South Alabama in 1829.

After Mr. Porter left in 1823, there seem to be no records to show any continuing connection between Newton Academy and the Presbyterian denomination, although it would appear that religious services may have continued to be held there until the Presbyterians completed the erection of a church building on Church Street in 1841.

Newton Academy continued to serve the educational needs of the community for many years. A two-story brick building was erected there in 1858 and the Academy continued for some years thereafter. In 1907 the property was deeded to the City of Asheville and a public school was operated there for two years, after which the building was abandoned. In 1922 a white stone grammar school building was erected on the site and the school retained the old name. It is now listed as Newton Elementary School, 534 Biltmore Avenue.

After Porter's resignation in 1823, the Presbytery of Concord directed certain ministers to preach at points in and around Asheville. The entry for September 3, 1825, reads: The "Rev. James McRee, D. D., 1 Sabbath at Asheville and 1 at Swannano and 1 at Rim's Creek."

Dr. McRee was a widely-known minister. He was born near Centre Church in North Carolina May 10, 1752. He studied at Princeton College and, in April, 1778, was licensed to preach the Gospel. In November, 1778, he became pastor at Steele Creek and remained there about 20 years. In 1798 he became pastor of Centre

Church and continued as such about 30 years. Due to the infirmities of age he gave up his pastoral charge and removed to the mountains of Western North Carolina to reside with his children. He was a popular and influential minister. He died March 28, 1840.

The Presbytery records also show for September 3, 1825: The "Rev. A. D. Metcalf, 1 Sabbath at Asheville and 1 at Swannano and 1 at Rim's Creek."

Then, on April 5, 1828, there is this entry: The "Rev. John Silliman, 1 (Sabbath) at Asheville."

The period from 1823 until 1829 appears to have been a time of little activity in the church life of Asheville Presbyterians, although the records of the Presbytery show ministers were assigned to preach here. The minutes of the General Assembly reported the Asheville church as without a pastor from the time the Rev. Francis H. Porter left in 1823 until 1829 when the Rev. Robert Hett Chapman, D. D., became stated supply, with the church at that time having 21 members. Then for the years 1830, 1831 and 1832 the church was not listed in the minutes of the General Assembly. Apparently the church was without a pastor or stated supply from 1829 to 1836 when the Rev. Christopher Bradshaw served as stated supply, most likely for just a few months. The church then had 20 members, and was grouped with Reems Creek and Swannanoa.

During this period, however, there is a reference to the Asheville church in the manuscript Records of Concord Presbytery, which state, under date of October 4, 1832 (vol. III, p. 12) that "A number of individuals of Asheville presented to Presbytery a petition, requesting inasmuch as they have been regularly organized a Presbyterian church, they be taken under the care of this Presbytery, and be known as the Presbyterian Church of Asheville. Whereupon resolved that said request be granted."

Asheville, in that year, had a population of about 350.

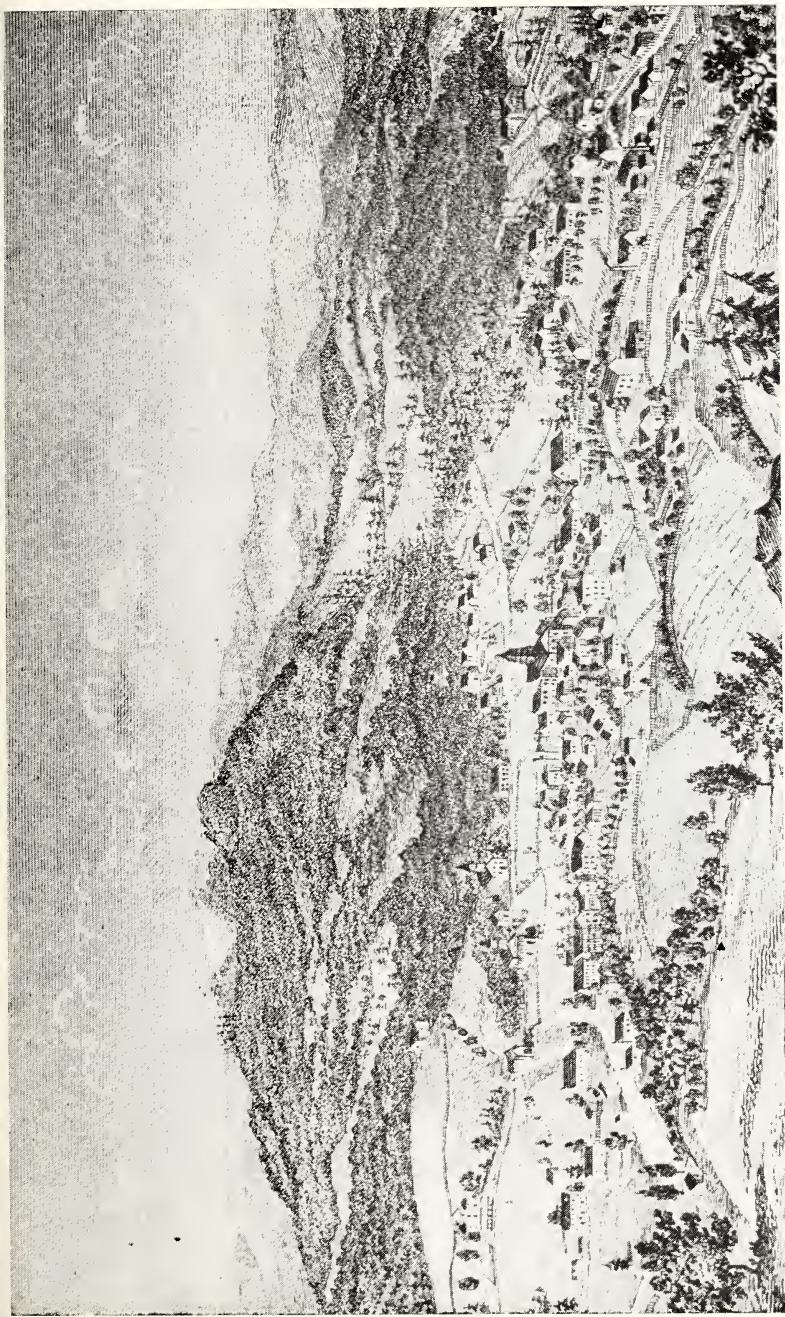
CHAPTER V

First Building on Church Street

The history of the First Church on the property it now occupies on Church Street dates from 1837, when it had 25 members. In that year James Patton and Col. Samuel Chunn proposed to deed land on what is now Church Street for the purpose of erecting a church building to be used by both the Old and New School branches of the Church and to be sacredly devoted "to the worship of the one only living and true God, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost; and to the exposition, defense and inculcation of the doctrine and duties contained in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as explained and taught in the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church"

A campaign to raise funds for erection of the church building—to cost about \$4,000—was conducted in the summer of 1837, with Samuel Chunn, James M. Smith and Joshua Roberts serving as a committee to receive subscriptions.

At a meeting of subscribers, held Monday evening, September 25, 1837, in the Buncombe County Courthouse, it was reported that the amount subscribed totaled \$1556. Resolutions, offered by the Rev. A. S. Levenworth and passed unanimously, set forth that the amount subscribed was sufficient to warrant the appointment of a building committee. On motion, Col. Samuel Davidson and Peter Stradley were appointed as a committee to nominate trustees and a building committee. For trustees, they nominated Col. Samuel Chunn, Charles Moore, John Hawkins, John B. Whiteside and James W. Patton; and for the building committee they nominated Col. Chunn, James W. Patton, John B. Whiteside, Dr. J. F. E. Hardy and J. T. Poor. These nominations were approved unanimously. It was also felt by the subscribers that from the "knowledge we have the build-



The First Presbyterian Church, facing east, is shown in this sketch of Asheville in 1851 as viewed from Beaucher Mountain. The three churches on Church Street, from left to right, are the Episcopal, Presbyterian and Methodist. This drawing by C. H. G. F. Loehr is reproduced from Henry E. Colton's "Mountain Scenery."

ing committee may expect to received the sum of at least \$2,000", and it was resolved that it "obtain from a competent architect the draft of a building 40 x 60 feet, to be constructed of brick, to estimate the expense thereupon."

The church building was completed in August, 1841, at a cost of approximately \$4,000. In charge of erecting it was Col. Ephraim Clayton, son of Lambert Clayton, one of the justices of the peace who organized Buncombe County April 16, 1792. Col. Clayton, as a contractor, erected many buildings in the Carolinas and Georgia. They included the Buncombe County Courthouse which was burned in 1865, the Newton Academy structure which was removed to make way for the present Newton school building on Biltmore Avenue, and the first Episcopal Church in Asheville.

Funds were insufficient to complete payments when the First Church was finished in 1841. The balance of about \$600 was not paid until about the year 1843, when the sum was obtained through the devoted labors of Mrs. Sarah Rosanna Morrison, a daughter of James Patton. In 1842 the church had 30 members.

In October, 1842, according to agreement, the land for the church was deeded by James Patton and Col. Chunn. On October 8, Patton conveyed to the five trustees of the church a part of the land on which the First Church now stands. The remainder of the site was conveyed by Col. Chunn at about the same time.

The brick church building which first occupied the Church Street site stood in a grove of splendid oaks, faced to the east, and was reached by a wooden bridge that extended to it from what is now Biltmore Avenue. The bridge spanned the hollow in what is now South Lexington Avenue. Later the bridge was abandoned and entrance to the church was from a walkway along the north side from Church Street to the eastern end, or front, of the building. About 1877 the entrance was changed from the east to the west end of the church, the work being done by T. C. Westall and Major W. W. McDowell.

Part of the land deeded to the trustees of the church in 1842 was set apart as a burying ground. The first burying ground used by white settlers appears to have been at the Robert Patton Meeting-

house in Swannanoa Valley. Then land at Newton Academy was set aside as a burying ground, and later there was a cemetery at what is known as Eagle Circle, at the southeastern corner of Eagle and Market Streets. Still later, the graves at the latter place were removed to the Presbyterian churchyard, which extended northward from Willow (now Aston) Street along the east side of Church Street as far as the Presbyterian Church. There were also some burials just to the north of the church. All of these graves, with the exception of that of James Patton, were removed to Riverside Cemetery after the Asheville Cemetery Company, Inc., was organized in 1885.

James Patton, who deeded part of the land for the church site, was born in Ireland February 13, 1756. He came to America in 1783 and became a merchant, trading in Wilkes, Burke and Buncombe Counties. In 1791 he went into business with Andrew Erwin, who later married his sister, Jane Patton. In 1807 the partners moved to Swannanoa and in 1814 to Asheville. Patton became well known here as a merchant, hotel owner, tanyard operator and farmer. He died in Asheville September 9, 1846, and is buried under the Church House, formerly known as the Library Building. His son, James W. Patton, one of the five trustees to whom the church property was conveyed, was born February 13, 1803, and attended Newton Academy. He, too, became prominent as a merchant and hotel keeper in Asheville, and for many years was chairman of the County Court of Buncombe. He died in December, 1861.

Col. Samuel Chunn, who also deeded part of the land for the church site, was a native of Wilkes County, North Carolina. He lived for many years in Asheville, operating a hotel and engaging in other business enterprises. He also served as chairman of the County Court of Buncombe and as an Asheville commissioner. Chunn's Cove, east of Asheville, bears his name. He died in November, 1855.

CHAPTER VI

Old and New Schools

During this period, 1837 to 1841, when the Presbyterians of Asheville were struggling to build a new house of worship, a controversy arose in the denomination that reflected itself in this community.

For 35 years — from 1801 to 1836 — the Presbyterian Church in America enjoyed remarkable growth. This was attributed to two main causes: the plan of cooperative union; and the great revival of religion in large sections of the country, most notably in Tennessee and Kentucky. As the years passed, however, the cooperative plan of union did not bring harmony. Instead, it brought, especially in the newer synods, what was described as a looseness in Presbyterian doctrine and church government. Finally, there was a severe controversy, resulting in a division of the Presbyterian Church into two parties — the Old School and the New School.

In 1836, when the New School party had a majority in the General Assembly, the Old School became alarmed. Gaining a majority in the 1837 General Assembly, the Old School succeeded in the passage of resolutions which declared the plan of cooperative union with the Congregationalists to be unconstitutional. The plan was abrogated and all actions under it were declared null and void.

As a result, four synods, which had been formed under the plan, were cut off, thus dividing the Presbyterian Church into two separate and distinct denominations. The membership of the Old School Assembly was about 120,000 and that of the New School Assembly more than 100,000. After the separation, the Old School grew at a faster rate than the New School.

This split in 1837 resulted in a division among the Presbyterians of Asheville. Perhaps it was due, in part, to a desire to reconcile the two parties here that James Patton and Col. Chunn proposed, in 1837,

to deed land for the erection of a church building to be used by both Old and New School branches of the Church.

The division was too deep, however, and, while plans for the church building made slow progress, the disagreement remained. Although Asheville was placed in Morganton Presbytery when that body was organized by the Synod of North Carolina on October 17, 1835, and was not returned to Concord Presbytery until the dissolution of Morganton Presbytery by the Synod on October 23, 1840 (Mss. Records of the Synod of North Carolina, Vol. II, pp. 340 and 651), the records of the Asheville church (Minutes of Session, Vol. 1849-1880, p. 4) show Asheville was stricken from the roll of Concord Presbytery when the only acting elder and some of the congregation went into the New Church Assembly after the organization of that body. The remaining members were directed to attach themselves to other churches, most convenient, that were connected with their own presbytery.

The Asheville church was continued on the roll of Concord Presbytery (Old School) through the 1840s, although practically no information in regard to the congregation was recorded during that period. Also, during the 1840s the name of the Asheville church appears in the Minutes of the New School General Assembly under the Presbytery of Union. The membership was listed, during several of these years, as 12. This inclusion goes through the Minutes of 1853. In those of 1854, Asheville is not found.

The period of division continued from 1837 to 1849, with the pastorate being vacant for long periods. Two ministers are recorded as having served the First Church, each as stated supply, during the time it was in the New School Assembly.

The Rev. Mr. Taylor, a member of Union Presbytery, N. S., preached at the church as stated supply. (Records of Session, vol. 1849-1880, p. 214). This minister probably was the Rev. H. F. Taylor, since he was the only minister by the name of Taylor who appears in the Minutes of the General Assembly, N. S., about this time as a member of Union Presbytery. He is listed in the minutes of 1843 (p. 64) as a stated supply, but the field of his work is not indicated. While the evidence is not conclusive, it is more than likely

that the Rev. H. F. Taylor was stated supply of the Asheville First Church in 1843.

From 1843 to 1845, a distinguished minister, who left a deep impression upon this community of 500 people, served as stated supply. He was the Rev. John Dickson, who was born in Charleston, S. C., in 1795. A student of both medicine and divinity, he graduated at Yale College in 1814 and studied at Andover College in 1820 and 1821. He was ordained in Charleston Presbytery in 1825. From 1823 to 1832, he was professor of languages and of moral philosophy in Charleston College. About the year 1832, he came to Asheville for his health. In 1836 he built a house at the junction of what is now Biltmore Avenue and St. Dunstan's Road. There he lived and conducted a school for young ladies, moving later to a brick building which stood on the site now occupied by the Drhumor Building and housing the Asheville branch of the Wachovia Bank and Trust Company, at the corner of Church Street and Patton Avenue. There he lived and taught until his death in 1847. His body "rests beneath the annex" of the First Church.

In 1905, a memorial tablet was placed on the south wall of the sanctuary by relatives of Dr. Dickson.

Dr. Dickson is remembered for the assistance he gave Elizabeth Blackwell, a native of Bristol, England, who lived in his home and taught music in his school after coming here from Cincinnati, Ohio. Miss Blackwell decided to study medicine and received her first instruction in this subject from Dr. Dickson. Later, through the influence of his brother, Dr. S. H. Dickson of Charleston, S. C., she was admitted to a medical school in Geneva, N. Y., where she received the M. D. degree in 1849. She was the first woman to be admitted to the medical profession in the United States.

Another instance illustrates the wide interests of Dr. John Dickson. When Prof. Elisha Mitchell of the University of North Carolina undertook to determine the elevation of the peak that now bears his name, he did so by comparing the readings of two barometers, one of which he took with him, after placing the other in the hands of Dr. Dickson in Asheville.

Dr. Dickson "was a man of learning and versatility, and his service to this community and to this church is worthy of grateful remembrance," said the Rev. Dr. Robert F. Campbell on the occasion of the centennial of Dr. Dickson's connection with the First Church.

Denominational controversy in Asheville was not confined to Presbyterians during this period. Baptists and Methodists also engaged in disputes. Credit for ending the troubles was given Methodist Bishop William Capers (p. 73, "Asheville: A Guide to the City in the Mountains," unpublished manuscript compiled by the North Carolina Writers' Project. 1941). Bishop Capers, one of the most popular preachers of his day, delivered a memorable address in the Methodist Church in Asheville in September, 1846. A capacity audience heard him preach for an hour and a half on this text from Matthew: "Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." The bishop concluded with a discussion of the beauty of Christian fellowship. "Thereafter, bitterness and strife between the factions were succeeded by cooperation, and with the construction of each succeeding church, regardless of denomination, citizens of all creeds made contributions of cash, land, labor and materials."

It need not be questioned that Bishop Capers' sermon on Christian fellowship had a marked influence on those who heard him, and on the community at large. It was more than three years later, however, before Asheville's Old and New School Presbyterian members concluded their differences. On December 22, 1849, the First Church was again organized under the authority of Concord Presbytery in response to a petition submitted by members of both the Old and New Schools in Asheville. (Minutes of Session, vol. 1849-1880, p. 4, and Mss. Records of Concord Presbytery, Vol. V, p. 432).

During the 1849 fall session of Concord Presbytery at Poplar Tent Church in Cabarrus County, North Carolina, it was ordered that the Rev. J. M. H. Adams, if the way be open, should proceed with the organization of a church in Asheville.

After this, the following paper was presented to the members of the Presbyterian Church, Old and New School, in Asheville and vicinity, and signed by those whose names were annexed:

"We the undersigned being persuaded that the intents of religion and the prosperity of the Presbyterian Church would be thereby advanced do earnestly desire to be organized into a Church in connection with the Presbytery of Concord to be styled the 'Asheville Presbyterian Church' and do agree to assemble on the 22 day of December, 1849, at 10 o'clock A. M. at the Presbyterian Church in the town of Asheville for that purpose.

"(Signed)—S. R. Momon, M. Murdock, Janie Cunyham, William Murdock, S. W. Chunn, Eliza A. Adams, W. I. Brown, Ann W. Brown, E. I. Brown, Delia A. Hardy, E. Penland, S. G. Kerr, Mary Kerr, May Ann, Frank and Elizabeth Patton."

On the day appointed, December 22, 1849, the meeting was held in the church "when the following persons were duly and solemnly organized into a church of the Lord Jesus Christ, in connection with the Presbytery of Concord:"

S. R. Momon, on certificate from Charlotte Church; M. Murdock, from New School Church, Asheville; W. Murdock, from New School Church, Asheville; Janie Cunyham, from Charlotte Church; Eliza A. Adams, from ————— Creek Church; Delia A. Hardy, from Morganton Church; Elizabeth Penland, from Asheville New School Church; Samuel G. Kerr, from Greensboro; Mary Kerr, from Methodist Episcopal Church, Greensboro; Elizabeth Patton, from Swannanoa Church; Charles, servant of J. M. H. Adams, from Third Creek Church. "The day being very inclement, Col. Brown, wife and daughter were prevented from attending."

After the organization, the church proceeded to the election of one ruling elder, Samuel G. Kerr. After a sermon by the Rev. G. W. Gibbs, Mr. Kerr was "solemnly set apart to the office of ruling elder in this Church according to the form prescribed in our book of discipline."

The Rev. James McEwen Hall Adams, who served the First Church as stated supply from the organization in December, 1849, until some time in 1850, was born in Lincoln County, North Carolina, December 25, 1810, the son of the Rev. James S. Adams and Erixina Adams. He was educated at the University of Georgia, where he received the bachelor of arts degree. After serving for a time as a

teacher, he studied at Columbia Theological Seminary and was licensed in 1833 and ordained as an evangelist in 1834 by Bethel Presbytery. He was pastor of the Bethel and Unity Churches of Concord Presbytery from 1834 to 1837. While pastor of these two churches he was married to Miss Eliza A. Burton of Lincoln County. He was pastor of the Third Creek Church of Concord Presbytery from 1837 to 1851 except for the period he served as stated supply of the Asheville First Church. From the Third Creek Church in 1851 he went to the church at Yorkville, S. C., as pastor. He also served as a professor at Yorkville Female College from 1851 to 1862. He died at Yorkville on March 31, 1862. He was a scholarly man of polished manner and pious demeanor and was a popular and efficient teacher.

Since the 1849 organization of the First Church, it has been regularly supplied with preaching, with the exception of an interval of about 18 months in 1851-52, and has grown steadily in membership and strength.

Although the Old and New School controversy came to a formal end in Asheville in 1849, it was not settled on a denomination-wide basis. The slavery issue became another subject of dispute between the two schools. In 1845 the Old School Assembly passed resolutions concerning slavery and these were denounced as a pro-slavery document. The following year, 1846, the New School Assembly passed resolutions condemning slavery. Then, in 1857, the New School Assembly passed anti-slavery resolutions of a more drastic nature than those approved in 1846. This resulted in the withdrawal of the southern branch of the New School and the organization of a separate New School Church in the South with about 10,000 members, its official name being the United Synod of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

The Old School Assembly, however, remained together until the outbreak of the War Between the States in 1861. In that year, the southern part of the Old School Church withdrew and organized a Southern Presbyterian Church. Thus, by 1861, the Presbyterian Church, united in 1837, had become divided into four parts, each a distinct denomination. The Old School North and the New School South were reunited in 1870. This is the Presbyterian Church in

the United States of America. The withdrawal of the southern part of the Old School Church remained permanent. The first General Assembly of the Southern Old School Presbyterians was organized in Augusta, Ga., on December 4, 1861. From that time until 1865 the official name was the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America. With the end of the war, the name was changed to the Presbyterian Church in the United States.

Thus the Asheville church, in the course of its history, has been a member of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, the New School Assembly, the Old School Assembly, the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America, and the Presbyterian Church in the United States.

CHAPTER VII

The War Period

Following the ministry of Mr. Adams, the pastorate was vacant until early in 1852 when the Rev. M. T. Allen became stated supply. He served until 1854, with 13 being added to the church membership during that time. The Asheville church was grouped with other home mission churches during these years and Mr. Allen served the First Church and the churches of Swannanoa and Reems Creek. Asheville's population at that time was about 800.

Then, early in 1855, came the pastorate of the Rev. Robert Hett Chapman, D. D., who had been stated supply here years earlier, in 1829. He served during the trying years that preceded the War Between the States and for a time during the war.

Along with the rest of Asheville, which had a population of about 1,100 in 1861, the First Church suffered hardships during the war. Grief came early to the congregation when two of its most prominent members, Dr. and Mrs. J. F. E. Hardy, lost a son, William Henry Hardy, 19 years of age, in the first battle of Manassas on July 21, 1861. The lieutenant, just before the battle, wrote a hurried note to Mrs. Hardy:

"Dear Mother:

"We are about to go into an engagement. I want you to know that, if I should be killed, all is well.

Willie."

Lieutenant Hardy was the first soldier from Buncombe County to fall in the War Between the States. His body was brought home and buried in the Presbyterian churchyard. His mother, Mrs. Cordelia Haywood Erwin Hardy, purchased a beautiful silver communion service, consisting of plates and goblets, and presented it to

the First Church in his memory. A tablet to his memory was erected in 1929 in the lobby of the Buncombe County Courthouse by the Asheville Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. His father, Dr. Hardy, during the four years of war, was the only physician who practiced without interruption in Asheville, all of the others at one time or another being connected with the army. He was the first president of the first Buncombe County Medical Society, founded in 1867.

Because of conditions during the war, Dr. Chapman left the pastorate here in March, 1862, and removed to Alabama to look after his large interests there. While here, he labored faithfully and acceptably. During the period of his pastorate, fifty-four members were added to the church rolls and the church changed from a mission status to a self-supporting basis.

Dr. Chapman was born December 26, 1806, and was educated at Union College, Schenectady, N. Y., graduating in 1828. For 10 years, from 1829 to 1839, he practiced law, and was ordained as a Presbyterian minister October 18, 1839. From 1839 to 1845, he was pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Talladega, Ala., and from 1845 to 1857 he was pastor at Greensboro, Ala. His career, after serving the Asheville First Church, included service as an evangelist in Mecklenburg Presbytery.

From 1866 to 1872, Dr. Chapman was stated supply of the Hendersonville, Mills River and Davidson River churches and, from 1873 to 1877, he was pastor of the Caldwell (now Paw Creek) Church in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. He then returned to Asheville, residing here from 1878 until his death on October 20, 1884.

After Dr. Chapman left the First Church in March, 1862, there was no pastor until the summer of that year when the services of the Rev. William Andrew Wood, D. D., were obtained as stated supply. He ministered to the congregation during the war years, serving until February, 1865. Thirteen members were added while he was here.

Dr. Wood was a native of Rowan County, North Carolina. He was born November 28, 1831, the son of William B. Wood and Margaret Knox Wood. He married Margaret Naomi Costin of Washington, N. C., June 9, 1861.

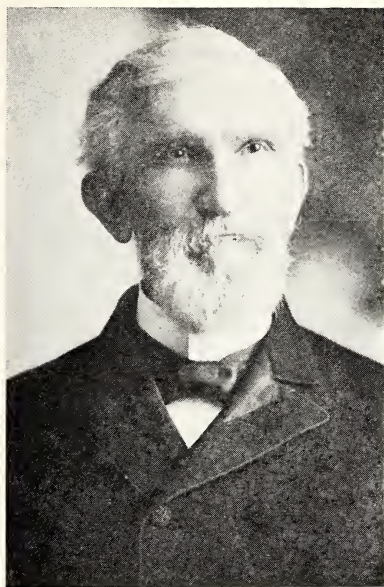
Dr. Wood received his bachelor of arts degree at Davidson College in 1852. After serving for a time as a teacher, he studied from 1854 to 1856 at Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey and Columbia Theological Seminary in South Carolina (now at Decatur, Georgia). He also studied for a year in Free Church College, Edinburgh, Scotland. Licensed June 17, 1857, and ordained July 23, 1859, by Concord Presbytery, he served as pastor of the Bethany, Fifth Creek and Tabor churches in Concord Presbytery in 1859-60.

He was pastor at Washington, N. C., in 1860-61, and served as chaplain of the 4th North Carolina Regiment, C. S. A., from 1861 to 1862, coming to the Asheville First Church as stated supply after duties with soldiers in the field. After his service here, Dr. Wood was stated supply of Third Creek and Unity churches in Rowan County from 1865 to 1869 and was pastor at Statesville, N. C., from 1869 to 1900. He died in Statesville on April 2, 1900. While he was pastor at Statesville, Hampden-Sydney College of Virginia conferred upon him the D. D. degree in 1879.

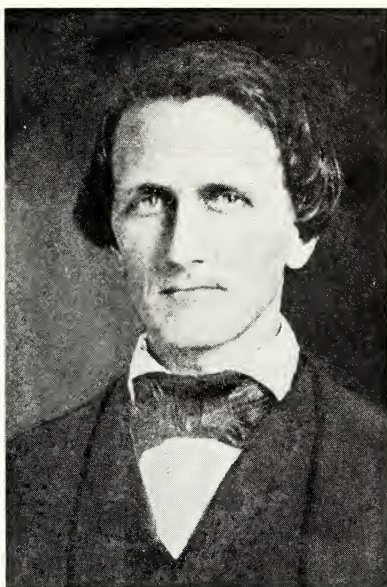
After Dr. Wood left the First Church early in 1865, a call was extended to the Rev. Henry Howard Banks, who became a Confederate Army chaplain in 1863 and was stationed with an artillery brigade in Asheville when the war ended. Mr. Banks came to the First Church in June, 1865, and was stated supply until 1867 when he was installed as pastor.

Illustrative of the seriousness with which the church session viewed its duties was its meeting on August 19, 1867, at which time the pastor, Mr. Banks, and Col. W. M. Cocke were appointed to talk with three members of the church who "have been guilty of the sin of dancing."

Mrs. T. S. Morrison, in later years, recalled attending services in the First Church in 1867 when Mr. Banks was pastor, and while she was a student in Asheville Female College. Among the families connected with the church, she recalled Dr. and Mrs. J. F. E. Hardy, Dr. Joseph and Major W. W. McDowell, the Chunnss, William J. Brown, the Morrisons, the Summeys, the Cains, the Hatches and the Tennents. The church grounds and graveyard, she recalled, were enclosed by a fence and the enclosure could be entered from either



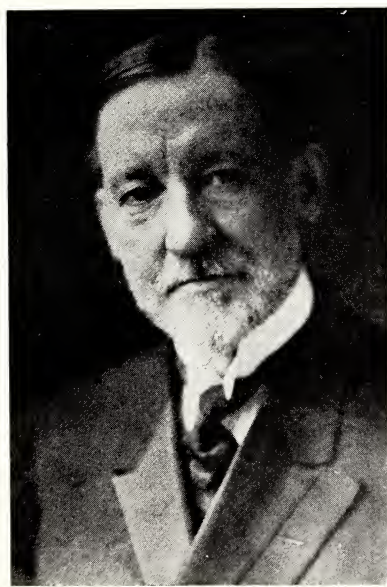
*The Rev. William A. Wood, D.D.,
Stated Supply, 1862-1865*



*The Rev. William B. Corbett,
Pastor, 1871-1876*



*The Rev. James K. P. Gammon
Stated Supply, 1876-1878
Pastor, 1878-1886*



*The Rev. William S. P. Bryan, D.D.
Pastor, 1887-1892*

east or west. The west entrance led along the north side of the church to its front entrance on the east, and the graveyard was, for the most part, in the rear or west end of the church. Church Street was hardly more than a lane. The pulpit was in the west end of the building, with the entrance being from a porch or terrace facing east. There were two aisles and one center door.

Mr. Banks, who served the church during the trying days that followed the war, remained until December, 1871. During his ministry, 52 were added to the church membership rolls, and the Asheville church, in 1869, was included in the new Presbytery of Mecklenburg.

Mr. Banks, whose son, Howard Banks, became editor of *The Gazette-News* (now *The Asheville Times*), was born at Spring Hill, Hempstead County, Arkansas, May 10, 1839, the son of the Rev. Alexander Robinson Banks and Elizabeth Pratt Banks. He married Annette Hawley of Asheville October 24, 1865.

Mr. Banks studied at Davidson College in 1857. After a period of ill health in 1857-58, he studied at Columbia Theological Seminary from 1858 to 1862. Licensed in April, 1861, by Ouachita Presbytery, Arkansas, he was stated supply of the Carolina and Pine Bluff, Arkansas, churches in 1861 and of Fairforest and Zion churches in Bethel Presbytery in 1862-63. Then he served until the close of the war as a chaplain in the Confederate Army.

Following his pastorate here, Mr. Banks was pastor of the Murfreesboro, Tenn., church from 1871 to 1873. He again suffered from ill health, but served as financial agent for Davidson College from 1873 until his death in Asheville on August 6, 1878.

In December, 1871, when Mr. Banks concluded his pastorate here, a call was made for the services of the Rev. William Bell Corbett, who served as pastor until the autumn of 1876. In this period, 32 members were added to the church. Asheville was still a small community, with a population of 1,450 in 1870. On June 21, 1873, Oak Forest (originally Sand Hill) Presbyterian Church was organized from a colony of the Asheville First Church.

Mr. Corbett was born in Charleston, S. C., September 30, 1827, the son of James and Sarah Dixon Corbett. He married Elizabeth

Witherspoon of Yorkville, S. C., February 24, 1858. Medicine at first attracted his interest and he received the M. D. degree at the Charleston Medical College in 1846. He practiced the profession for 18 months. From 1850 to 1853 he studied at Columbia Theological Seminary and was licensed and ordained in 1853 by Charleston Presbytery. From that year until 1858 he was pastor of the Wiltown Church in Charleston Presbytery. Other pastorates were at Cheraw, S. C., 1858-69, and Salem and Little River churches, Fairfield County, South Carolina, from 1869 until he came to the Asheville First Church. After leaving here, he was pastor of the Olney and Union churches in North Carolina from 1876 to 1882 when he became pastor at Bennettsville, S. C. Except for the years 1889-92, when he was stated supply of the Red Bluff and Tatum churches, he served the Bennettsville church from 1882 until his death on April 9, 1894.

The First Church, which had been self-sustaining, again became a missionary church under the care of the Presbytery in 1876. This was attributed to withdrawals, "unfortunate and unhappy discussions arising in the church," and other causes. (See "The First Church of Asheville, N. C.," article by Capt. S. F. Venable, Christian Observer, May 28, 1890.)

During the 14-year period from 1869 to 1883, there were three candidates for the gospel ministry from the First Church: George Summey, James H. Morrison and George F. Robertson.

CHAPTER VIII

Second Building on Church Street

The Rev. James Knox Polk Gammon became stated supply in 1876 and in March, 1878, he was called to the pastorate. He served "faithfully and successfully" until October, 1886, when he resigned, having accepted a call to the churches of Smithville and Drake's Branch, Virginia. Under his ministry, the First Church grew rapidly in membership — during the time when the Asheville community, too, was developing at a fast pace. Asheville in 1880 had a population of 2,610 and a decade later it had increased to 10,235. The church's spiritual state also improved. It soon passed into a condition of self-support and its members gave liberally to benevolent causes.

At the beginning of Mr. Gammon's connection with the church in 1876, there were 60 members. In 1886, at the close of his pastorate, the membership totaled 200. During that time 195 members were added. Total contributions, including the pastor's salary, were \$365.42 in 1878. Eight years later, in 1886, they were \$1,704.94.

During the pastorate of Mr. Gammon, the first church building erected on the Church Street site was taken down and replaced, in 1884-85, with the nave of the present building. The building committee included Thomas I. Van Gilder, Lewis Brown and C. E. Graham. The contractor was Captain John A. Wagner. The first building seated 175, and the new structure seated 600 persons, with the entrance on the west, or Church Street, side. The cost of the building was approximately \$8,000.

Of red brick, half hidden — as the years passed — by clinging vines, this stately church building of simple Gothic architecture was a beautiful house of worship. Its tall windows were of richly-tinted glass and the towering spire attracted much attention and admiration.

Construction of this second church building was made financially possible when Mrs. Mary Fulton, a member, deeded to the church her property at the southeast corner of North Main (now Broadway) and Chestnut Streets. Mrs. Fulton retained a life interest in the property. After the conveyance, the church mortgaged the property and used the funds thus obtained to pay a substantial portion of the cost of erecting the new church building. A small debt remained on the church. Mrs. Fulton died in 1895 at the age of 85, and the property came into possession of the church. It seemed an inopportune time to sell, and the property was held until 1899, when it was sold. The balance necessary to liquidate the debt on the church building was contributed by the congregation.

Mr. Gammon, who served the First Church during part of the decade that saw Asheville begin to develop into a city, was born in Sullivan County, Tennessee, October 19, 1842. He was the son of Capt. Abram Gammon and Myra Louise Anderson Gammon. In 1877, he married Susan Southall Langborne of Newport, Tenn. He studied at the University of Tennessee, was a lawyer for a time, and engaged in the mercantile business. In 1870-73, he studied at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia. He was licensed July 12, 1873, by Holston Presbytery and ordained in December, 1873, by Knoxville Presbytery. He was stated supply of the Third Church at Knoxville, Tenn., in 1873-74 and of the Pisgah and Dandridge churches, Newport, Tenn., before coming to Asheville in 1876. After leaving here in 1886, Mr. Gammon was pastor at Smithville, Va., from 1887 to 1889 and pastor of the Third Church, Richmond, Va., from 1890 to 1895. He died September 11, 1895.

After Mr. Gammon left in October, 1886, the pastorate was vacant until January, 1887, when the Rev. John Speck LeFevre was engaged by the session to act as temporary supply until a pastor could be obtained. He "labored pleasantly and beneficially" until May, 1887, but would not consider a call to the pastorate because of his feeble health. Eleven members were added to the church in this period.

Mr. LeFevre was born near Hedgesville, Berkeley County, Virginia (now in West Virginia), July 14, 1848, the son of Daniel L. and

Margaret LeFevre. He married Mary Elizabeth Wysong of Charles Town, West Va., July 8, 1881.

Mr. LeFevre studied at Hampden-Sydney College, Virginia, 1866-69, at the University of Virginia, and at Union Theological Seminary of Virginia, 1872-75. He was pastor at Big Lick (now Roanoke), Virginia, from 1875 to 1877. In poor health, he resided in Berkeley County from 1877 to 1880. From 1880 until he came to Asheville, he served various churches in Winchester Presbytery. He died at Rockbridge, Alum Springs, August 22, 1888, a little more than a year after he left the First Church.

In May, 1887, the church, by call, obtained the services of the Rev. William S. Plumer Bryan, D. D., as pastor. He took charge in July, 1887, and was installed in August. Under his ministry, which continued for about five years, the First Church grew rapidly—improvements were made in the physical properties, the membership showed a large increase, and contributions were more substantial. The First Church became one of the strong churches of Mecklenburg Presbytery. Communicants on April 1, 1887, totaled 199 and on April 1, 1890, the number was 291, an increase of 92 in three years. Contributions for all causes on April 1, 1887, totaled \$1,770 and on April 1, 1890, the total was \$3,977.66, besides expenditures of about \$5,000 for enlarging and improving the church.

The year 1890 was marked by two special events in the history of the First Church. The first was the improvement of the physical properties and the second was the meeting of the General Assembly in the Church.

While the improvements to the church building were in progress, church services were conducted by Dr. Bryan in the Battery Park Hotel, and Sabbath School and the Young People's meetings were held in the Y. M. C. A. hall. Work on the church was rushed in the spring of 1890 in order to have everything in readiness for the sessions of the General Assembly which met in the church from May 15 to 24. Extra forces of workmen were engaged and there was also a night crew. J. M. Westall was in charge of this work.

The first services following completion of the improvements were held Sunday morning, May 11, with Dr. Bryan preaching, to a large

congregation, from Ephesians 2:19-22. The new Roosevelt organ was played by F. L. Jacobs, and was described in The Asheville Citizen the next day as having "a softness of tone that is exquisite. The congregation was delighted with the instrument."

A report on the church enlargement was given by Captain S. F. Venable, educator and a ruling elder, in an article in the Christian Observer for May 28, 1890. He said, in part:

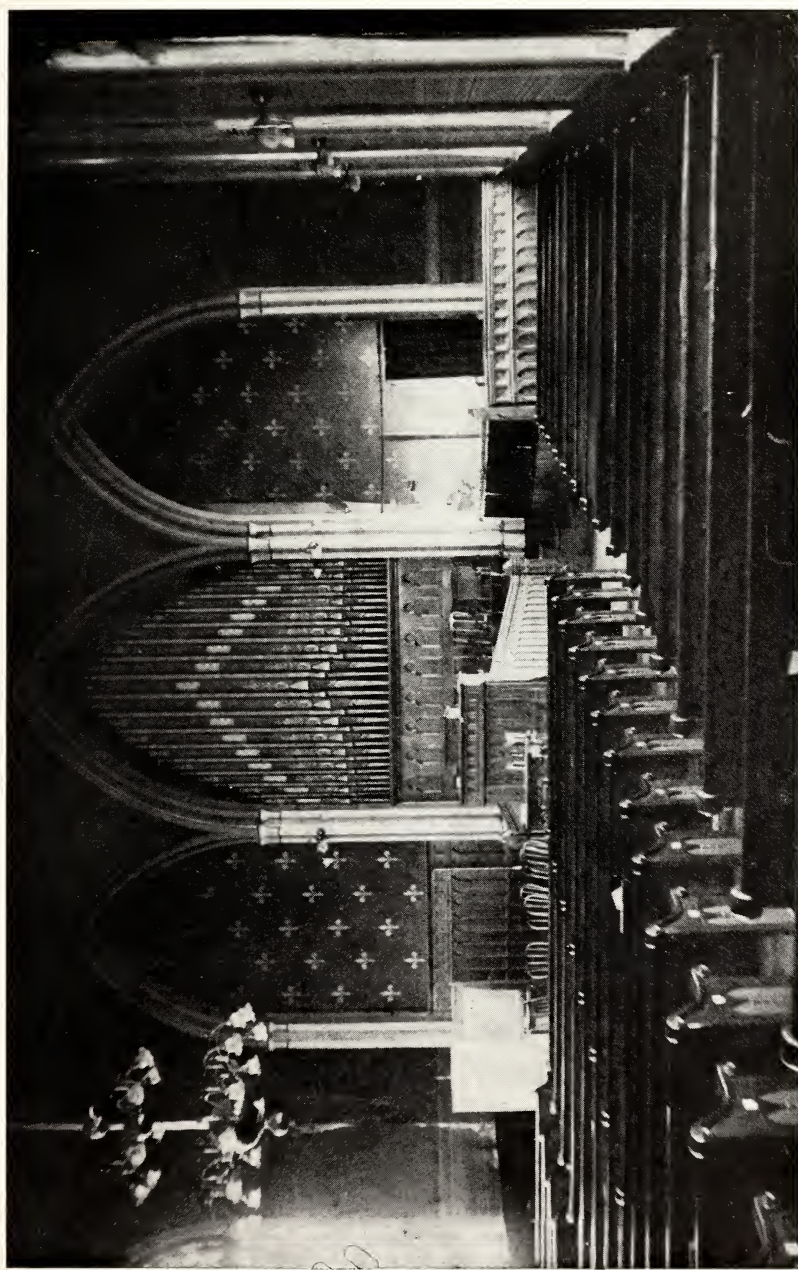
"A large semi-octagonal extension has been built at the rear, providing Bible class and infant classrooms below, and vestry, organ loft and choir loft on the auditorium floor. A large Roosevelt pipe organ has been placed immediately behind the pulpit. It is the first instrument of this celebrated make in the state of North Carolina, and it promises to give all the satisfaction which these expensive, but thoroughly made, instruments usually give.

"The walls and ceiling of the church have been treated after designs of Mr. Stent, a decorative architect of New York, who has also designed the new combination illuminating apparatus These changes in the church are made at an expense of something like \$5,000.00."

The Asheville Citizen, in its article of May 12, said that the interior of the church was "handsomely frescoed. The general ground work of the decorations is of buff and the side walls are of terracotta. On the walls there is a bordering of bands of peacock blue, olive and gilt. The curved portion between the ceiling and side walls is in graduated tones of peacock blue, and the mouldings around the windows are very light buff. On either side of the pulpit are panels of deeper terracotta, with Fleur-de-Lis designs in gold. The general effect is modest and unassuming, but is very pretty." The detached pastor's study was also built at this time.

The church had made extensive preparations in its role of host to the General Assembly. All of its facilities were made available, the commissioners were guests in the homes of Asheville people, and a reception was held in the Battery Park Hotel.

Dr. Bryan, who led the church in this period of substantial growth and service, left the pastorate in 1892 to accept a call to Cincinnati, Ohio. He was a native of Allegheny City, Pa. Born August 30,



The sanctuary after remodeling in 1890.

1856, he was the son of Samuel B. and Kate Plumer Bryan. He married Alice Reid of Staunton, Va., December 1, 1887.

Dr. Bryan received the bachelor of arts degree at Davidson College in 1875 and the master of arts degree there in 1878. He also studied at Columbia Theological Seminary. He served as pastor of the Tygarts Valley, W. Va., and Mingo Flats churches from 1878 to 1887 when he accepted the call to Asheville. After leaving here, he was in the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., from 1892 to 1925, serving as pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church, Cincinnati, from 1892 to 1894 and of the Church of the Covenant, Chicago, Ill., from 1895 to 1925. He died in Chicago May 29, 1925, having served in his pastorate there for 30 years. Centre College, Danville, Ky., honored him with the D. D. degree.

CHAPTER IX

The Rev. Robert F. Campbell, D. D.

After Dr. Bryan left the First Church in 1892, the pastorate remained vacant for nine or ten months.

On November 5, 1892, a call was extended to and accepted by the Rev. Robert Fishburne Campbell, D. D., who came to the First Church as stated supply on December 11, 1892, and thereby began a ministry here which was distinguished by its length in years and the high quality of its service. As stated supply, as pastor, and as pastor emeritus, his connection with this church continued for more than 54 years, until his death on April 3, 1947. The story of the First Church during those years is in large measure the story of Dr. Campbell and his work.

Dr. Campbell was born in Lexington, Va., December 12, 1858, the son of John Lyle Campbell, LL. D., who for 35 years held the chair of chemistry and geology at Washington and Lee University at Lexington, and of Harriet Hatch (Bailey) Campbell. He was educated at Washington and Lee, where he won honors in scholarship, graduating in 1878 with the bachelor of arts degree. Following a year of graduate study there, he also received the master of arts degree.

Dr. Campbell devoted three years, 1879 to 1882, to teaching. Then, having determined upon the ministry as his life's work, he entered Union Theological Seminary at Hampden-Sydney, Va., now at Richmond. He studied there for three years.

He was licensed by Lexington Presbytery on August 30, 1884, and ordained May 18, 1885. At Lexington, on October 8, 1885, he and Miss Sarah Montgomery Ruffner were married.

During Dr. Campbell's ministry, he filled four pastorates, the first three during the first seven years after his ordination. From 1885 to 1889 he served the Millboro and Windy Cove churches in Bath

County, Virginia, and then became pastor of the Davidson College Church at Davidson, N. C., where he remained one year, 1889 to 1890. From the latter year to 1892 he was pastor of the Buena Vista Church in Virginia. He was at Buena Vista when he received the call to become stated supply of the Asheville First Church.

Dr. Campbell arrived here on December 8, 1892, and preached his first sermon from the pulpit of the First Church on Sunday, December 11, 1892, one day before his 34th birthday anniversary. At that time the church had a membership of 333.

Dr. Campbell continued as stated supply until July 2, 1893, when he was installed as pastor. In that year, Davidson College honored him with the degree of Doctor of Divinity.

In 1896, in Dr. Campbell's fourth year as pastor here, his leadership was felt in two important expansion movements — one relating to the Presbytery and the other within the First Church itself.

The First Church, at that time, was in Mecklenburg Presbytery, Synod of North Carolina. Dr. Campbell, after assuming the pastorate here, had made a study of the spiritual and material needs of the mountain territory and he responded when, in the words of the Rev. R. P. Smith, D. D., "a Macedonian cry came from the mountain people."

Mecklenburg Presbytery extended from a point about sixty miles east of Charlotte westward to the North Carolina-Tennessee State line. Eleven North Carolina counties — Henderson, Buncombe, Madison, Transylvania, Macon, Clay, Cherokee, Graham, Swain, Jackson, Haywood — with a total population of 140,000 constituted what had been described as the backyard of Mecklenburg Presbytery.

There were only ten ministers and fifteen churches in the area. The churches, with a total membership of 853, were widely scattered. The First Church of Asheville was the only self supporting church in that large area. The roads were bad, at times impassable, and it was found to be impractical to have call meetings of the Presbytery. The home mission field, it was felt, was not being cultivated adequately.

With these needs in mind, the First Church, under the leadership of Dr. Campbell, together with Dr. Smith and others, initiated a movement for the organization of a new presbytery. This met with

success, and Asheville Presbytery was organized at a meeting held in the First Church on December 2, 1896, the eleven counties mentioned having been separated from Mecklenburg Presbytery by the Synod of North Carolina to form the new field.

The excellent results achieved in Asheville Presbytery since the organization meeting in 1896 have proved the wisdom of those who sponsored the organization. Dr. Campbell served as moderator of Asheville Presbytery on several different occasions. Upon its organization, he became chairman of the Home Mission Committee of the Presbytery, and continued in that capacity during the remainder of his pastorate.

As chairman of that committee, Dr. Campbell worked in close association and harmony with the Rev. Robert Perry Smith, D. D., who labored for 33 years as the first superintendent of home missions in Asheville Presbytery. The most fruitful part of Dr. Smith's work was in establishing and fostering mission schools — in the years before the wide-spread interest in public education in this state, and in the founding of the Mountain Orphanage.

Dr. Campbell, as chairman of the Home Mission Committee, and Dr. Smith, as superintendent of home missions, were the co-founders of the Mountain Orphanage, near Swannanoa. It opened its doors January 19, 1904, on Crabtree Creek in Haywood County. It was moved to Balfour about 1908 and to its present site near Swannanoa in 1923. Since its founding, it has met a great need in caring for orphaned children of many denominations.

The First Church has given excellent support to this home mission work, and has contributed generously to beneficent causes.

In the late autumn of 1896, at a joint meeting of the elders and deacons, it was agreed that Dr. Campbell should have an assistant, since the work of the church was too heavy for him. Dr. Campbell, however, took the position that an assistant would not solve the difficulty. Instead, he said, it was his mature judgment that the only solution was another pastor of another Presbyterian church "set off as a colony of the First Church, and so equipped as to be a competitor of the First Church from the beginning."

He added that "nothing would do the mother church as much good as the sending out and equipping of what should be a self-sustaining colony."

After a month of consideration, a practically unanimous resolution in favor of a new church was passed by the elders and deacons in joint session. Dr. Campbell, in a sermon, said there is a spiritual need, an economic need, a need from the standpoint of the First Church, and a need from the standpoint of the new Presbytery of Asheville for another strong Presbyterian church in Asheville. The only objection, he said, was financial.

Writing in the North Carolina Presbyterian under date of January 28, 1897, Colonel Robert Bingham, a ruling elder of the First Church, said that "colony or no colony has been the burning question" for two months. The matter was referred to the congregation on Sunday, January 24, 1897, and by a vote of seven to one it was decided to send out the colony if the money could be raised to build and equip a church for it. The sum of \$15,000 was needed to do this and Dr. Campbell announced that a lady (Mrs. Ex. Norton) who was not a member of the First Church, had promised to give \$5,000 if the congregation would raise \$10,000. A subscription list was opened, and nine of the elders and deacons subscribed \$3,500. Including the \$5,000 originally offered, subscriptions amounted to about \$11,000. Dr. Campbell's judgment, in which several of the officers concurred, was to go ahead, buy the lot, and build either the auditorium or the Sunday School room, with the purpose of completing the whole building in the future. However, several of the large subscribers, who had pledged sums only on condition that the whole amount should be obtained, withdrew, others followed, and the plan failed to materialize.

CHAPTER X

Years of Growth

By 1900 Asheville had a population of 14,694. As the city increased in size, the Church grew, thus necessitating larger facilities. A forward step in this connection took place in 1901-03.

Mrs. Emily McDivitt had often expressed a desire to provide a more suitable place for the children of the Sunday School. In her memory, Samuel P. McDivitt, her husband, made an offer in December, 1901, that — subject to certain limits — he would contribute 80 per cent of the sum necessary to erect a Sunday School building and to fully equip the church for its work. The only condition was that the congregation raise the other 20 per cent. This proposal was unanimously accepted by the session with expressions of gratitude. On January 12, 1902, it was announced that \$2,000 had been raised. This, with \$8,000 from Mr. McDivitt, provided a fund of \$10,000, and ground was broken for the Sunday School building on March 18, 1902.

Besides the Sunday School building, the north transept was added to the church building and the gallery enlarged, increasing the capacity of the church by about 180 sittings.

The entire cost was approximately \$14,000 with \$9,000 of this from Mr. McDivitt. The balance of about \$5,000 was raised by the congregation through contributions and through the sale, for \$2,500, of the church-owned lot at the corner of Church and Willow (Aston) Streets.

In 1902, through the liberality of Mrs. Ex. Norton, the pastor's study, in the small, separate brick building, was renovated and enlarged.

The completion of the Sunday School building and the improvements to the church furnished an appropriate occasion for the long-



(from "Asheville," published by H. Taylor Rogers)

The First Presbyterian Church in 1899

deferred dedication of the church, the main part of which was erected in 1884-85. The debt on the church had actually been liquidated in 1899. The dedication services were held Sunday morning, January 25, 1903, with T. S. Morrison, its chairman, reporting for the building committee, and Dr. Campbell preaching from II Corinthians 6:13, "Be ye also enlarged."

The growth of the church and Sunday School was so substantial in the first few years of the 20th century that, within three years, plans were made for enlargement of the Sunday School. The church officers in joint session on March 5, 1906, decided to undertake this, provided the necessary funds could be raised. A second story was added on the south side of the building, providing room for 60 or 70 pupils.

In the spring of 1909, the First Church purchased for \$4,500 the Asheville Library Association property adjoining it on the south, for the purpose of using it as part of the Sunday School. James Patton, in deeding land for the Presbyterian church in 1842, had stipulated that a plot in the church graveyard should belong to the Patton heirs. By an arrangement made in November, 1893, possession of the plot was transferred to the Library Association, the Patton heirs—Captain T. W. Patton and Miss Fanny (Frances Louisa) Patton—considering the library building to be erected upon it as a fitting memorial to James Patton. Plans for the building were contributed by Cram, Wentworth and Goodhue, Boston architects, and J. M. Westall of Asheville donated his services in superintending the erection of the building, which was formally opened as a library in March, 1894. After the church bought the property in 1909, the library building became known as the Church House.

The year 1909 was also marked by the establishment of another colony by the First Church. A small colony was sent out from the church to form the Ora Street Presbyterian Church in Asheville, and a building was erected to house the congregation, which was organized on May 19. The Ora Street church continued until November, 1935, when the congregation was dissolved. The building was sold in 1943.

The interest of the First Church and its pastors in the welfare of the community has been shown on numerous occasions. Notable

among these was Dr. Campbell's paper, "The Children's Court," which he read at a meeting of the Pen and Plate Club on June 17, 1909. This led to the establishment of the Asheville Juvenile Court.

In 1911 the pastor of the First Church, Dr. Campbell, was responsible for the organization of the Good Samaritan Mission in Asheville, and for many years he served as its president.

The 20th anniversary of Dr. Campbell's pastorate here was fittingly observed on December 12, 1912, by the church which by then had 600 members, and the city a population of 18,672. Ruling Elder S. D. Holt was appointed to address the pastor and to present a gold watch and chain to him, and a diamond pendant to Mrs. Campbell. Col. Robert Bingham was appointed to address the congregation. The latter said, in part:

"Asheville is largely composed of people who were born elsewhere. Members have been received into the Asheville Presbyterian Church by letter from as many as ten states in three months . . . Members of this church have been dismissed to as many as seven states in a single quarter; and probably two-thirds of the states in the Union have been represented on our church roll during the last twenty years.

"This peculiar condition has caused some to feel and to say that this is a 'cold church and cold community,' though a little thought would have convinced them that this seeming indifference and coldness are inseparable from a community so migratory and made up of people born in places so widely scattered and with so little previous knowledge of each other . . .

"Dr. Campbell has been here for twenty years and has grown steadily in the estimation of his own church, of the other churches, and in the estimation of the community at large, and he has become so influential, not only in religious matters but also in all civic questions, that some have called him the leading citizen of Asheville. In the pulpit he is both a preacher and a teacher. He illuminates the Scriptures; . . . he is mighty in the Scriptures, clear, strong, orthodox, evangelical, tender and effective . . . His manner in the pulpit, or rather the absence of manner, or at least of anything approaching mannerism is notable . . . He seems entirely unconscious of himself in the pulpit, but deeply conscious of his message, which he delivers

directly from God to the people Dr. Campbell is a Christian knight, pure in life and in thought, without fear and without reproach."

In May, 1913, at the meeting of the General Assembly in Atlanta, Ga., Dr. Campbell, as chairman of the committee on closer relations with other ecclesiastical bodies, presented a report that was directed toward the eventual consolidation of all reformed churches in America holding the Presbyterian system. Under this "Pan-Presbyterianism" plan, there would have been a Greater Presbyterian Congress, formed directly on the plan of the Congress of the United States, with a senate and house of representatives. The churches of the federation would have representation in the lower house on the basis of the number of communicants, and every church in the federation would have equal representation with every other church in the upper house, the concurrence of both houses to be necessary for authoritative action.

The germ of this Presbyterian Federal Congress idea is found in action taken by the Presbytery of Asheville in 1900 following a proposal made by Dr. Campbell. In its action, the Presbytery approved the Articles of Agreement adopted in 1900 by the Conference of the Reformed Churches of America holding the Presbyterian system, but regarded them as "the very loosest tie" and expressed the hope that the churches concerned will advance from the Articles of Agreement to a plan of federation, embodying the spirit of a true and vital union with such constitutional restrictions and safeguards as may more effectively conserve the individual rights and distinctive principles of the respective churches as co-ordinate and co-equal members of the federation. Several years afterwards it occurred to Dr. Campbell that the Federal Congress, with two houses, was the best way to accomplish this end.

The year 1915 marked another achievement in which the First Church, through its pastor, participated. Dr. Campbell's leadership was instrumental in the formation of the Synod of Appalachia which held its organization meeting on November 2, 1915, in the First Church of Bristol, Tenn. Dr. Campbell was elected moderator after preaching the opening sermon by appointment of the General As-

sembly. Asheville Presbytery was included in the jurisdiction of the Synod of Appalachia and Dr. Campbell became general chairman of the Synod's Work Committee.

Due to the growth of the Sunday School, classrooms became so crowded that in 1915 decision was reached to remodel and enlarge the Sunday School annex. At the same time it was also decided to enlarge and redecorate the sanctuary. The Sunday School auditorium was enlarged by pushing back the east wall.

George H. Wright, Sr., who was superintendent of the Sunday School, recalls that Sunday School was held in the building after workmen had started excavation at the rear. The following day the east wall collapsed and a portion of the roof fell. The day being Monday, no one was in the building at the time.

The remodeling provided the Sunday School with a building 60 feet wide, about 160 feet deep, with two stories in front and three in the rear. The auditorium was circled by an upper floor gallery opening into classrooms. There were 32 classrooms and, in 1915, a total of 46 officers and teachers and 27 classes. The school was graded and divided into five departments.

In the sanctuary, the south transept was added, increasing again the seating capacity of the church. The choir stall was enlarged, the floor resurfaced, the heating and lighting systems improved, and the walls and ceiling redecorated. The ceiling was white, the side walls a dark cream color and the aisle carpets and pew cushions were green.

The work on the Sunday School annex was completed and the new facilities were used for the first time on December 5, 1915, with a house-warming being held on December 30. The work on the sanctuary was completed in the following month, with the first services being held after remodeling on January 30, 1916.

Plans for the enlargements and improvements were drawn by William J. East, architect, and McDowell and Patton were the contractors. Members of the building committee were J. H. McConnell, T. S. Morrison, and F. E. Mitchell. Finance committee members were George H. Wright, Sr., P. R. Allen, Col. D. M. Hodges and D. S. Watson. The total cost of more than \$30,000 was met by subscriptions.

In 1916, another colony of 41 members from the First Church formed the nucleus of the West Asheville Presbyterian Church. This had its beginning in 1913 when the Rev. P. P. Winn started a movement in West Asheville after he had found several Presbyterian families there with no church facilities. He organized a Sunday School which met in an old store building. A committee to perfect the organization met on October 29, 1916, at the instance of the Rev. H. D. Bedinger who had been sent here to unite the people in a church. Forty-one members were found and, with the assistance rendered by those from the First Church and others in the city, they built a church at the corner of Haywood Road and Virginia Avenue.

The West Asheville Church, which has grown in membership and service, sponsored the Malvern Hills Presbyterian Church which was organized in October, 1943. The latter church, the daughter of the West Asheville church, thus became the granddaughter of the First Church.

During World War I the First Church was a source of comfort and strength to the members, and the pastor—strongly patriotic—devoted much time and energy to maintaining morale on the home front. It was during these strenuous days that Mrs. Campbell died in Asheville, on August 20, 1917.

In the spring of 1918, Dr. Campbell — alone at home while his son Ruffner was away as an ensign in the Navy, and having had opportunities offered to him elsewhere — decided to resign the pastorate. There arose, however, such a wave of protest that he was persuaded to remain.

Dr. Campbell's second marriage was to Miss Julia T. Berryman, a native of Shelbyville, Kentucky, on June 18, 1919. They had one son, Robert F. Campbell, Jr., born January 10, 1921.

By 1920, Asheville's population had increased to 28,504 and during the following decade it grew to 50,167. The First Church also enjoyed rapid growth in membership, leading to the necessity of action being taken to meet the situation. After consideration for 14 months by the elders and deacons, Dr. Campbell, on June 20, 1926, announced plans for additions to the church building and erection of a Second Presbyterian Church in Asheville. Growth of the church, he said,

warranted these two expansion plans. The most rapid period of growth that the church had known since it was organized, the pastor said, had occurred within the previous six months, additions having been made to the membership practically every Sunday that year. The Sunday School had increased its membership fifty per cent in three years, and it had been fully departmentalized.

The new plans included enlargement of the Sunday School assembly hall, the addition of 12 classrooms and two assembly rooms, the installation of a modern heating and ventilating plant, and redecoration of the interior of the church. This, it was pointed out, would make the church adequate for its membership of 1,250. As evidence of the life and activity of the church, the report for the previous year showed total contributions to be nearly \$55,000, more than half of which was given to benevolent causes. It also showed that 100 had been added to the membership during that period. The Sunday School enrollment was 1,658. Organizations of the church, or affiliated with it, were the Men of the Church, the Woman's Auxiliary, the Christian Endeavor, and Boy and Girl Scouts. The Men's club was instrumental in organizing a mission Sunday School at Oteen to serve all denominations.

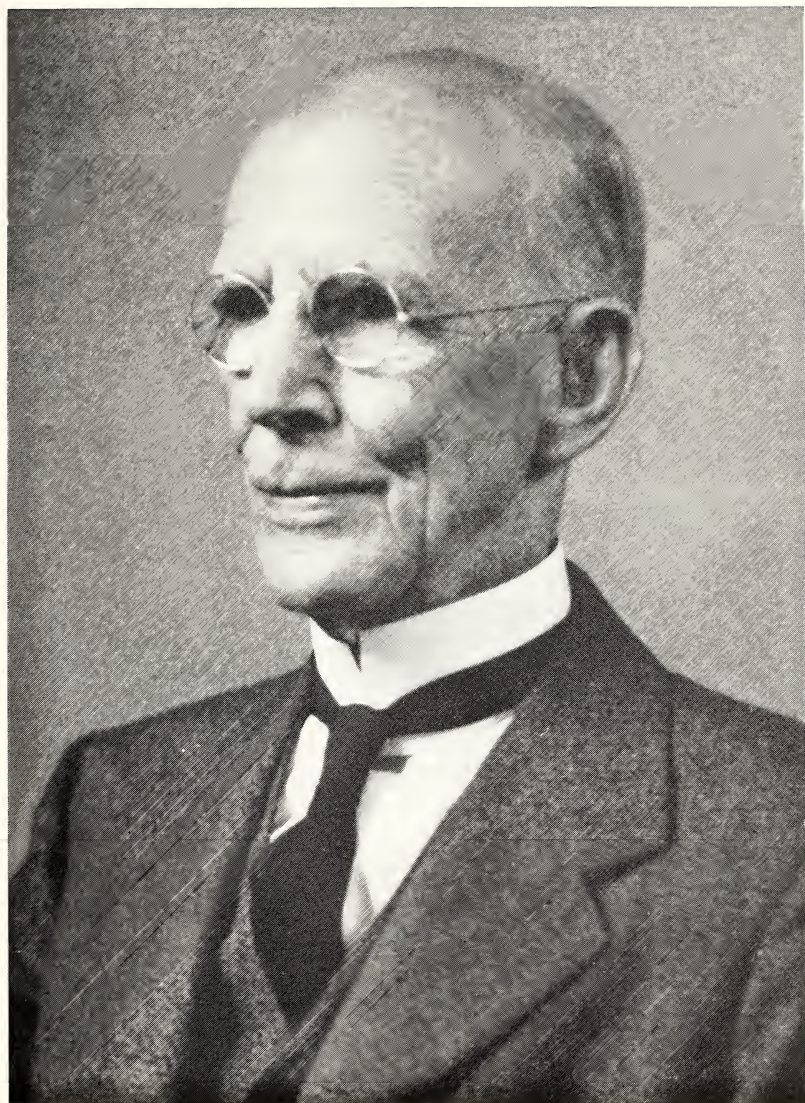
The plan was to erect the Second Presbyterian Church on a suitable location.

The 1926 plans did not materialize, however, due to adverse economic conditions.

In May, 1927, at El Dorado, Ark., the General Assembly honored both the First Church and its pastor by electing Dr. Campbell moderator on the first ballot.

On the occasion of the 35th anniversary of his first sermon in the First Church, Dr. Campbell, on December 12, 1927, once again urged the congregation to establish a second Presbyterian church. Eight persons in the congregation that day indicated they had been present when he preached his first sermon here 35 years before. Then the church had 333 members. In 1927, the membership had increased to about 1,400.

"Our church is full; our Sunday School is overcrowded," said the pastor. He indicated there were two choices: (1) "We can en-



*The Rev. Robert Fishburne Campbell, D.D.
Stated supply, 1892-1893; pastor, 1893-1938;
pastor emeritus, 1938-1947.*

large the church, but it has been enlarged twice and is an old building. (2) We can build a second church and equip it and send a colony of 200 or 300 members of the First Church. The downtown district and the suburbs would then be served. Friendly rivalry would do wonders for the church."

No definite steps were taken that year, however.

Besides its support of home missions and other benevolent causes, the First Church was supporting two missionaries in the foreign field, Mr. and Mrs. William J. Anderson of Lubondia, Africa.

For the purpose of assisting in the work of the church, the Rev. Leland Nichols Edmunds became assistant pastor of the First Church in June, 1929, remaining in that capacity until October 1, 1933. Mr. Edmunds, who also directed the young people's work and was superintendent of the Sunday School, was born in Sumter, S. C., the son of Dr. and Mrs. S. H. Edmunds. In 1922 he received the bachelor of arts degree from Presbyterian College of South Carolina. For two years he taught in the American school in Shanghai, China. Upon his return to the United States in 1924, he enrolled as a student in Union Theological Seminary at Richmond, graduating with the bachelor of divinity degree in 1927. Licensed and ordained by East Mississippi Presbytery, his first pastorate was at the Amory, Miss., Presbytery Church. He remained there for fifteen months and then studied for a year at Princeton Theological Seminary where, in 1929, he received the master of theology degree. Within a few days after his graduation there he came to Asheville as assistant pastor of the First Church, arriving on June 8. Due to the need for curtailing church expenses during the depression, he resigned on October 1, 1933, and accepted a call to the pastorate of the Aiken, S. C., First Presbyterian Church where he served from October 20, 1933, until November, 1941, when he accepted a call from the Presbyterian Church at Black Mountain, North Carolina. During World War II, Mr. Edmunds was commissioned as a lieutenant in the United States Naval Reserve and served as a chaplain from October 15, 1943, until August, 1946.

He then accepted a call to the pastorate of the Second Presbyterian Church of Newport News, Va., and has served there since.

At two different periods in the later years of his pastorate, Dr. Campbell was assisted in his duties by Randolph Keith Axson. Mr. Axson, a cousin of the first Mrs. Woodrow Wilson, was for five years lay assistant to the Rev. Dunbar Ogden, D. D., pastor of Central Presbyterian Church, Atlanta, Ga. On September 10, 1922, he was named assistant to the pastor of the Asheville church and began his service on October 1. Mr. Axson resigned his position in 1928 to accept a call to serve the First Presbyterian Church of Charlotte, N. C. In 1934 he was called back to the Asheville First Church as assistant to Dr. Campbell, a position he held until 1939 when he became financial secretary of the church. Mr. Axson retired in January, 1942, and went to Savannah, Ga., where he made his home with his sisters, the Misses Clara Belle and Leila Axson, until his death in Savannah on Sunday, May 6, 1945. His wife, who died while they were residing in Asheville, was Mrs. Leila Hall Axson.

In 1930, Dr. Campbell was accorded another high honor when he was chosen to deliver the James Sprunt Foundation lectures at Union Theological Seminary in Richmond. Under the title, "Freedom and Restraint," these lectures were published in book form. Dr. Campbell also was the author of a number of brochures.

On December 14, 1930, Dr. Campbell, from his pulpit, preached a sermon that had a definite influence on community thinking. His subject was "Our Civic Crash" and he stressed the mistake of compromising principle on the grounds of expediency.

The 100th anniversary of the renewal of the Asheville Church's active relationship with Concord Presbytery in 1832 was celebrated on Sunday, December 11, 1932, with a sermon by Dr. Campbell at the 11 o'clock service and a sermon by the assistant pastor, Mr. Edmunds, at the evening service. Dr. Campbell spoke on the history of the church and Mr. Edmunds preached on "Christian's Creditor."

The First Church, through Dr. Campbell, chairman of the Home Mission Committee of the Presbytery, aided in the establishment of the Kenilworth Presbyterian Church. In September, 1933, the Presbytery appointed a commission, consisting of Dr. Campbell, the Rev. R. P. Smith, D. D., and the Rev. H. B. Dendy, D. D., to obtain a

minister to serve the Presbytery as church extension worker in South Asheville. The Rev. Paul N. Gresham, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Savannah, Ga., was selected. On April 1, 1934, the church was organized (appropriately from the historical point of view) in the Newton school building on Biltmore Avenue. In June, 1934, the congregation attended the first services in its own church building. On July 18, 1934, Mr. Gresham was installed as pastor.

CHAPTER XI

The Rev. C. Grier Davis, D. D.

In 1937, after having served since 1892, Dr. Campbell decided to relinquish the pastorate in favor of a younger man, and at the service on Sunday morning, March 2, he announced to the congregation that his resignation would become effective on December 12, 1937, the date of his 79th birthday anniversary and the day after the 45th anniversary of his pastorate, or as soon thereafter as a new pastor could be obtained.

It was no easy task to select a successor to Dr. Campbell. Months went by before the decision was made, and a unanimous call we sent to the Rev. Calvin Grier Davis on March 27, 1938. He was the pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church at Norfolk, Va., where he had served for five years, from 1933 to 1938.

Dr. Davis was born at Wilmar, Arkansas, on September 15, 1906, the son of Coleman Robert Davis and Ollie Hillard Davis. He studied for one year at Hendrix College, Conway, Ark., and for three years (1924-27) at Davidson College, where he received the bachelor of arts degree and was a member of the Y. M. C. A. Cabinet, and of the debating and wrestling teams. In 1928-29 he studied at Princeton Theological Seminary and from 1929 to 1931 at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, where he received the bachelor of divinity and master of theology degrees.

Dr. Davis was licensed and ordained on June 18, 1931, by Pine Bluff Presbytery. He worked for one year in the mission fields of Arkansas and after graduating from Union Theological Seminary he served two years (1931-33) as assistant pastor of Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church in Richmond. He then accepted a call to Norfolk where he became a recognized leader in the religious life of the community and made an outstanding record as pastor. On July 6,

1935, while he was pastor of the Second Church at Norfolk, Dr. Davis was married to Miss Rebecca Spencer McDowell of York, S. C. They have two sons, Calvin Grier, Jr., and James McDowell. Grier, Jr., was born February 11, 1937, and James on June 17, 1940.

Dr. Davis, young (31), vigorous, eloquent, preached his first sermon in the First Church here on Sunday morning, May 15, 1938. His text was from Romans 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." He was installed as pastor on Sunday morning, June 12, 1938. The Rev. R. D. Bedinger, chairman of the commission appointed by Asheville Presbytery to install the new pastor, presided and preached the sermon.

Illustrating the strength of the First Church during Dr. Davis' first year as its pastor was the four-day campaign in December, 1938, when the sum of \$10,250 was given by 358 members of the congregation to exceed the church's quota of \$10,000 for the \$3,000,000 annuity fund of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. The membership of the First Church at that time was 1,172.

Asheville, in 1940, with a population of 51,310, was recovering from the effects of the depression of the 1930s. With the improvement in the financial outlook, the most extensive modernization program of the present day at the First Church had its beginnings on September 29, 1940, when plans were presented to the congregation at an evening meeting. Dr. Davis was the leader in this movement.

The initial project called for renovation of the church auditorium, with the primary changes being construction of a new chancel providing for a new arrangement of the choir and the pulpit, new pews, restoration of the Gothic lines to the ceiling, balconies over each transept, construction of a dining hall in the basement under the church auditorium, a kitchen, and a platform stage for plays and pageants.

For two years prior to that time, a committee had worked on the plans, aided by Dr. E. M. Conover of New York, chairman of the Interdenominational Bureau of Architecture, who served as a consultant; Wenner and Fink of Philadelphia, who drew the plans, and Anthony Lord, Asheville architect. The church committee was com-

posed of Theodore D. Morrison, chairman; Granville Taylor, George H. Wright, Sr., Dana Burns, James Coleman, J. Lawrence Widman, Roy P. Booth, Charles D. Parker, Miss Alda Wilson, Mrs. R. A. Little and Mrs. Burnham S. Colburn, Sr.

It was proposed to do this work over a considerable period of time and as it could be financed. Named to the finance committee were R. R. Williams, Sr., chairman; Dr. Paul Ringer, George H. Wright, Sr., Walter Abernethy, Burnham S. Colburn, Sr., James M. Coleman, J. Lawrence Widman, W. H. Arthur, Everett Mitchell, Dr. J. W. Huston, Miss Genevieve Rutherford, Mrs. H. Edwin Pollock, Mrs. Gilbert Morris, I. J. Reuter, R. Stanford Webb and Caleb Smith.

In connection with these plans, an eight-page booklet, entitled "A Centenarian Plans Its Future," was issued in November, 1940. The title referred to the fact that in August, 1941, the First Church would have completed one hundred years of ministry at its present location.

Included in the booklet was a message to the congregation from Dr. Campbell, pastor emeritus, and Dr. Davis, pastor. They said:

"In the prosperous looking days of the late 20s plans were inaugurated for the enlargement and improvement of the church building. This movement was interrupted by the financial crash and postponed until better times should justify its renewal.

"These better times are at hand, and your officers have spent two years, with the help of the best available architects, in perfecting plans which in our judgment are not only in keeping with the architecture of our church building and with the best in Presbyterian tradition but will give to this church one of the most beautiful and well-appointed buildings in the country. These plans have been submitted to the congregation for criticism, and suggested alterations have been given careful consideration before reaching a conclusion. All that was of value and could be saved in the present structure has been preserved.

"We agree with your officers that the time has long since passed when the House of God should not only be repaired, but beautified and enlarged, to meet the needs of our people. We write in an



*The Rev. Calvin Grier Davis, D.D.
Pastor, 1938—.*

earnest appeal to every member of the congregation to contribute as liberally as possible to this movement."

The building committee gave a number of reasons why decision was reached to recommend a complete renovation of the church structure. They included: Air and light are largely cut off on the south side of the church auditorium; the ceiling is low and unattractive; the choir stall is inadequate and poorly arranged for efficiency; the organ is very old and should either be renovated or replaced; the pulpit is too high for the front pews; the aisles are in part poorly arranged, with the result that there is much crowding after services; proper ventilation is impossible; most of the heating plant is practically worn out; the windows and window frames need replacement; the Sunday School auditorium is almost useless on account of its acoustics; the church house is inadequate as a social hall; the dining room and kitchen facilities are far below the needs; time and termites have about destroyed the church offices; the roof of the church must be re-laid or replaced; the steeple needs recovering; the entire plant needs redecoration.

The first proposed step in this program was the renovation of the church building. The finance committee appointed by the Session said that in its best judgment the plans could be carried out at a cost of approximately \$100,000, but that no indebtedness on the church plant should be incurred, with work to be done only as funds were actually in hand to pay for it. Further, the committee held that as large a percentage as possible of each gift should be payable in cash, with pledges to be payable over a period not to exceed 18 months.

With these objectives before it, the church launched the building campaign in November, 1940, the first contribution being a gift of \$10,000 by Mrs. Irving J. Reuter. Additional contributions brought the total gifts to \$42,000.

The major plans were postponed, however, as a result of World War II and the church, true to its purpose, turned its full attention to Christian service in the time of crisis. Dr. Davis, an earnest, consecrated pastor, preached to large congregations and his sermons, scholarly and Christ-centered, and marked by clearness, eloquence and force, brought hope and comfort to many a saddened heart.

On Sunday, December 13, 1942, the First Church observed two anniversaries. The congregation extended its felicitations to Dr. Campbell, pastor emeritus, on the occasion of the double celebration of his 84th birthday anniversary, December 12, and the 50th anniversary, December 11, of his connection with the church. The Rev. Walter L. Lingle, D. D., president emeritus of Davidson College, preached a sermon on "Our Presbyterian Heritage" and the church Bulletin contained a 12-page supplement devoted to a biography of Dr. Campbell. A union anniversary service was held in the evening, with Dr. Davis presiding. Greetings were extended by representatives of the congregation, the Ministerial Association, the Catholic Church, Congregation Beth-ha Tephila, the City of Asheville, and the Good Samaritan Mission. Letters of tribute were read by Dr. Davis, and an address was delivered by the Rev. Henry B. Dendy, D.D., of Weaverville, on the subject, "Dr. Campbell and the Asheville Presbytery."

Dr. Campbell was described as the beloved first citizen of the Presbytery and of the Synod. It was an unusual occasion, for few churches have had the privilege of participating in observances of this kind.

At Commencement time in 1943, signal recognition came to the pastor of the First Church. On May 11, Dr. Davis received his Doctor of Theology degree from Union Theological Seminary, and within a few weeks he was awarded the honorary degrees of Doctor of Divinity by Tusculum College, Greeneville, Tenn., and by Davidson College. In awarding the degree, Davidson College cited Dr. Davis as "an assiduous student, a wise counselor of youth, an inspiring leader of men, the pastor of a great church, and a distinguished preacher."

The only parts of the physical program of the church not postponed because of the war were the purchase of a new heating plant for the Sunday School building and two pieces of property on Aston Street to be used toward solving the parking problem.

On September 10, 1944, a campaign to raise \$60,000 for the post-war renovation work was launched with Roy P. Booth as general chairman. Other officers of the campaign included R. R. Williams, Sr., chairman of the finance committee, Theodore D. Morrison, chairman

of the building committee, and Charles D. Parker, treasurer. Dr. Davis at this time announced that the church had \$41,000 in war bonds, raised in the campaign in November, 1940, and that it was planned to put the money raised in the new campaign into war bonds, also. As a result of the campaign, the building fund was increased to \$73,863.

In the spring of 1945, the church bought an eight-room brick house at 52 Sunset Parkway to serve as a Manse. The pastor and his family moved from a rented dwelling at 72 Evelyn Place.

The year 1945 marked the retirement of Dr. Campbell from another position he had so long and ably filled. On December 11, his 87th birthday anniversary, he retired as president of the Good Samaritan Mission, a position he had held for 34 years, and was elected president emeritus. Dr. Davis was elected president and in the same month of that year he was also elected president of the Ministerial Association of Asheville and Buncombe County.

CHAPTER XII

Physical Improvements

After the end of World War II, plans for modernization of the church were revived. At a congregational meeting on November 18, 1946, George H. Wright, Sr., chairman of the building committee, explained a plan to raise \$100,000 toward the general remodeling and modernization of the church. Dr. Davis also spoke on the proposed changes, saying that at least \$100,000 should be added to the church's building fund of \$73,500 before actual construction began. It was estimated that the entire project would cost approximately \$200,000. This third phase of the long-range building campaign brought the fund to approximately \$114,000.

It was in 1947 that grief came once again to the First Church. Dr. Campbell, pastor emeritus, became ill on March 22 of influenza and pneumonia, and he passed away at his home, 6 Pearson Drive, on April 3 at the age of 88. The funeral services were conducted by Dr. Davis in the First Church on April 5, and interment was in Riverside Cemetery. The church and the people of Asheville felt a deep sense of loss in the passing of a towering figure in the religious life of the community, of a leader who had worked tirelessly in behalf of the church, of Christian citizenship, civic righteousness, the improvement of moral conditions, the betterment of interracial relations and the observance of the Sabbath day. His convictions were based on principle and he never compromised for the sake of expediency. As such, he was a source of community strength.

May 15, 1948, marked Dr. Davis' 10th anniversary in the pastorate here. Once each year, since his first sermon in the First Church, he has preached on his first text, from Romans 8:28.

In October, 1948, the building committee of the church published an attractive 18-page booklet entitled "Our Tower of Strength," as "a

challenge to action worthy of our day to remodel, modernize and beautify its edifice and facilities in keeping with the opportunity God has set before it."

The booklet begins:

" 'A Tower of Strength!' This is how an outside observer has described the First Presbyterian Church of Asheville, N. C. Since the pioneer days of 1797 this church has grown with Asheville."

It continues: "The historical significance of this church, however, cannot be told alone in terms of how it acquired its plant and equipment. As Dr. Calvin Grier Davis declared in a sermon delivered September 10, 1944: 'The greatness of this church for the half century dating from 1893 has lain in the greatness of our distinguished pastor emeritus, Dr. Robert F. Campbell. He made her great as an evangelistic agency in this community so that the Presbyterian Church has grown almost twice as rapidly as the population of the city. He made her great in home mission work so that the churches in this Presbytery have increased from eight to thirty-two.

" 'He made her great in all benevolences so that hundreds of thousands of dollars have been given to foreign missions, Christian education, ministerial relief, and other worthy causes. He made her great among the churches of this city so that no worth-while movement has been begun or continued in this period without the support of this church.

" 'Three times in twenty-two years, from 1893 to 1915, Dr. Campbell led this congregation in a building program. In the late twenties, he and the officers were planning an extensive renovation and rebuilding movement which was halted by the depression'."

With the launching of the 1948 phase of the building campaign, the church had on hand approximately \$98,000. At that time it was said that the fund campaign was determined upon after careful re-examination of the earlier studies of reconstruction needs. Attention was directed to the church's increasing financial strength as indicated by its current expense and benevolent giving. During the 10-year period from 1938 to 1948, the church's annual giving increased from \$29,049 to \$85,466. While part of this increase was attributed to gifts to the building fund, totaling \$114,831, the support of the current

budget was increased from \$16,613 in 1938 to \$36,091 in 1948. Giving to benevolences rose from \$12,436 in 1938 to \$32,685 in 1948. The records show that for this 10-year period the church had raised \$568,-845 for all purposes. Of this, \$193,502 had gone for benevolences as represented by the General Assembly, the Synod of Appalachia, Asheville Presbytery and local causes. During the four years preceding 1948 the church had met its current expenses and benevolent obligations and, in addition, annually placed in its building fund an average of \$18,559.50.

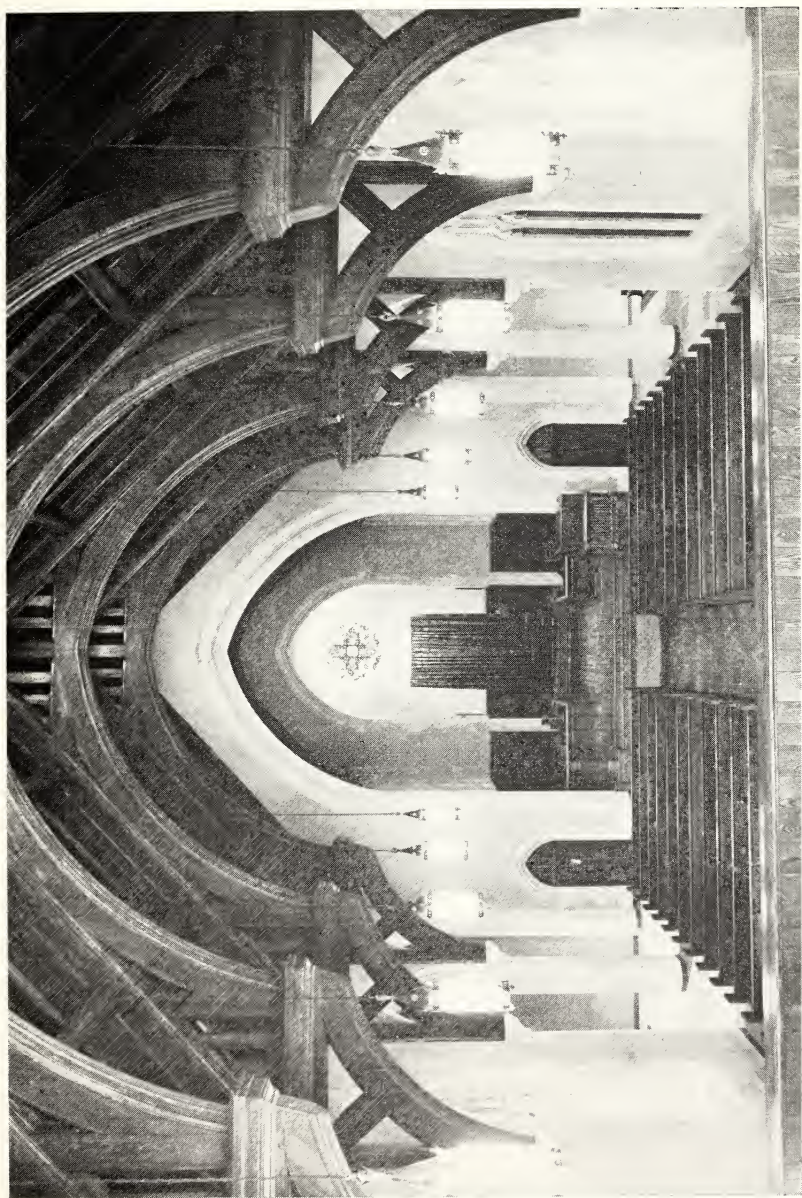
The unit plan of renovation, contemplated in 1940, still appeared to the building committee to be the most logical and to offer the most advantages. The order called for the reconstruction of the sanctuary first, to be followed by remodeling of the church school and, finally, by the construction of a new building to provide a chapel and church offices.

The officers of the church decided that, in order to guard against the possibility of a lack of sufficient funds to pay for the work as it progressed, there should be on hand approximately \$240,000 at the beginning of construction. The overall cost of the program was estimated at \$430,000, divided approximately as follows among the three units: Remodeling of sanctuary, \$240,000; remodeling the church school, \$90,000; construction of new building, \$100,000.

In planning for unit one, which included the sanctuary, the building committee proposed that, in addition to providing for the worship needs of the church, extensive facilities be made available for fellowship purposes, including, in the basement, recreation rooms for young people and a Boy Scout room. A substantial addition at the rear of the church would make possible a large fellowship hall for use both as an assembly room and dining room, served by a large, modern kitchen.

This addition also would afford a large chancel appropriate to the reconstructed sanctuary, choir rooms, and educational facilities, especially a room for showing motion pictures to church school groups.

The plans for reconstruction of the sanctuary itself included a beautiful new chancel, the replacement of all windows with new art glass, reconstruction of the ceiling to conform to the Gothic lines of



The Sanctuary in 1951

the roof, re-roofing of the tower, widening the narthex and complete redecoration.

The building committee at that time, 1948, was composed of George H. Wright, Sr., chairman; Walter I. Abernethy, W. H. Arthur, Sr., Ed. N. Atkinson, Irving W. Bingham, Roy P. Booth, Dana B. Burns, John M. Carroll, James M. Coleman, Raymond E. Matthews, Charles D. Parker, Irving J. Reuter, Dr. Paul H. Ringer, Caleb R. Smith, R. Stanford Webb, R. R. Williams, Sr., J. L. Widman, Joseph L. Hunter, Clarence Trotti and Ralph P. Grant.

On November 23, 1948, the task of collecting funds for the building program was launched following a meeting of leaders and workers. The immediate goal was \$140,000, to add to the money on hand, in order to complete unit one of the renovation program. Dr. Paul H. Ringer was general campaign chairman, Joseph L. Hunter, general solicitation chairman, and John M. Carroll chairman of initial gifts. H. R. Hadcock of the firm of Marts and Lundy, New York City, aided in the organization of the campaign. The total amount pledged was \$165,000.

Plans for another Presbyterian Church in Asheville, advocated on numerous occasions by Dr. Campbell, were advanced materially in August, 1949. At that time Asheville Presbytery's Home Missions Committee, under the chairmanship of Dr. Davis, bought for \$47,250 the Asheville-Biltmore College property at 789 Merrimon Avenue as the eventual site of a new Presbyterian Church to serve the North Asheville area. With a frontage of about 440 feet on Merrimon Avenue, the property consists of four and six-tenths acres, a two-story brick building and a small one-story frame structure. The First Church, aiding in the purchase of the property, agreed to set aside \$2,000 a year in its budget for this purpose.

Preliminary work on unit one of the three-part program of the First Church began on September 12, 1949, with the Merchant Construction Company in charge and Anthony Lord as architect. The initial work involved test drilling for construction just back of the building to provide an enlarged nave and additional rooms on the floor below.

The following were named as a sub-committee to supervise the new program: Roy P. Booth, chairman; I. J. Reuter, vice chairman; J. Lawrence Widman, E. N. Atkinson and S. C. Minnich, Jr.

As remodeling work proceeded and work began on the sanctuary itself, it was necessary to find temporary quarters elsewhere for worship services. The morning services were held in the Imperial Theater on Patton Avenue, beginning on Sunday, April 16, 1950. The Union Hour of the First Presbyterian and Central Methodist Churches was held in the Methodist church each Sunday evening, with the two churches alternating responsibility for the service. The Presbyterian church school continued to meet in its regular place.

As work continued on the sanctuary, decision was reached to rebuild the 120-foot steeple, its wooden beams having deteriorated beyond repair. The slate roof and copper steeple were completed late in 1950, and a central oil-burning heating system was installed.

In April, 1951, the church membership was 1,758, an increase of 586 since the beginning of Dr. Davis' pastorate in 1938 when the membership was 1,172. This growth was at a far greater rate than that of the population of the city, which was listed in the 1950 census at 53,000.

Gifts for all causes by the First Church congregation, for the year ending in April, 1951, totaled \$134,289, including \$32,822 for benevolences, \$48,265 for current expenses, and \$53,202 for the building fund. In 1938, gifts totaled \$29,000.

Work on the sanctuary, whose seating capacity was increased from 680 to 747, was completed early in August, 1951. This involved far more than remodeling the interior of the old structure. The incomplete extension which contains the completed chancel is virtually a large building itself: 88 by 37 feet, three stories high, and of brick, steel and concrete.

As of July 31, 1951, the total costs were as follows: Real estate, \$6,182.27; construction, \$302,178.01; general expenses, \$13,941.41; total paid to date, \$322,301.69; additional construction costs already incurred, \$45,857.23; total costs, \$368,158.92; amount paid by gifts and interest, \$253,468.66; remainder, \$114,690.26. Of the remaining cost, \$75,500 was listed as paid from borrowed money.

After completion of the sanctuary, reconsideration was given to the original project which was conceived as consisting of three units: Remodeling the sanctuary, improvements in the church school building, and erection of a chapel south of the present church building. After reconsideration, the plans were modified, and emerged as follows: Finishing the other rooms in the new extension which contains the chancel; and improvements in the church school building and inclusion of the chapel in this structure. The chapel is to be known as the Campbell Memorial Chapel in tribute to the memory of Dr. Robert F. Campbell.

In addition to the amount remaining unpaid (\$114,690.26), it was estimated that \$55,000 would be required to complete the new extension. To modernize the Church School building and construct the chapel, the cost was placed at about \$100,000 and to complete the entire plant the expenditure was estimated at \$269,000. The total pledges of the congregation toward this budget amounted to \$195,000, consisting of \$20,000 in unpaid pledges from the 1948 campaign and \$175,000 in new pledges. Mr. and Mrs. Irving Jacob Reuter gave \$35,000 for the purchase of a pipe organ in memory of their daughter, Wilma Pearl.

On Sunday morning, August 5, 1951, the congregation returned home after having held morning worship services in the Imperial Theater and Union Hour services in Central Methodist Church for more than 15 months.

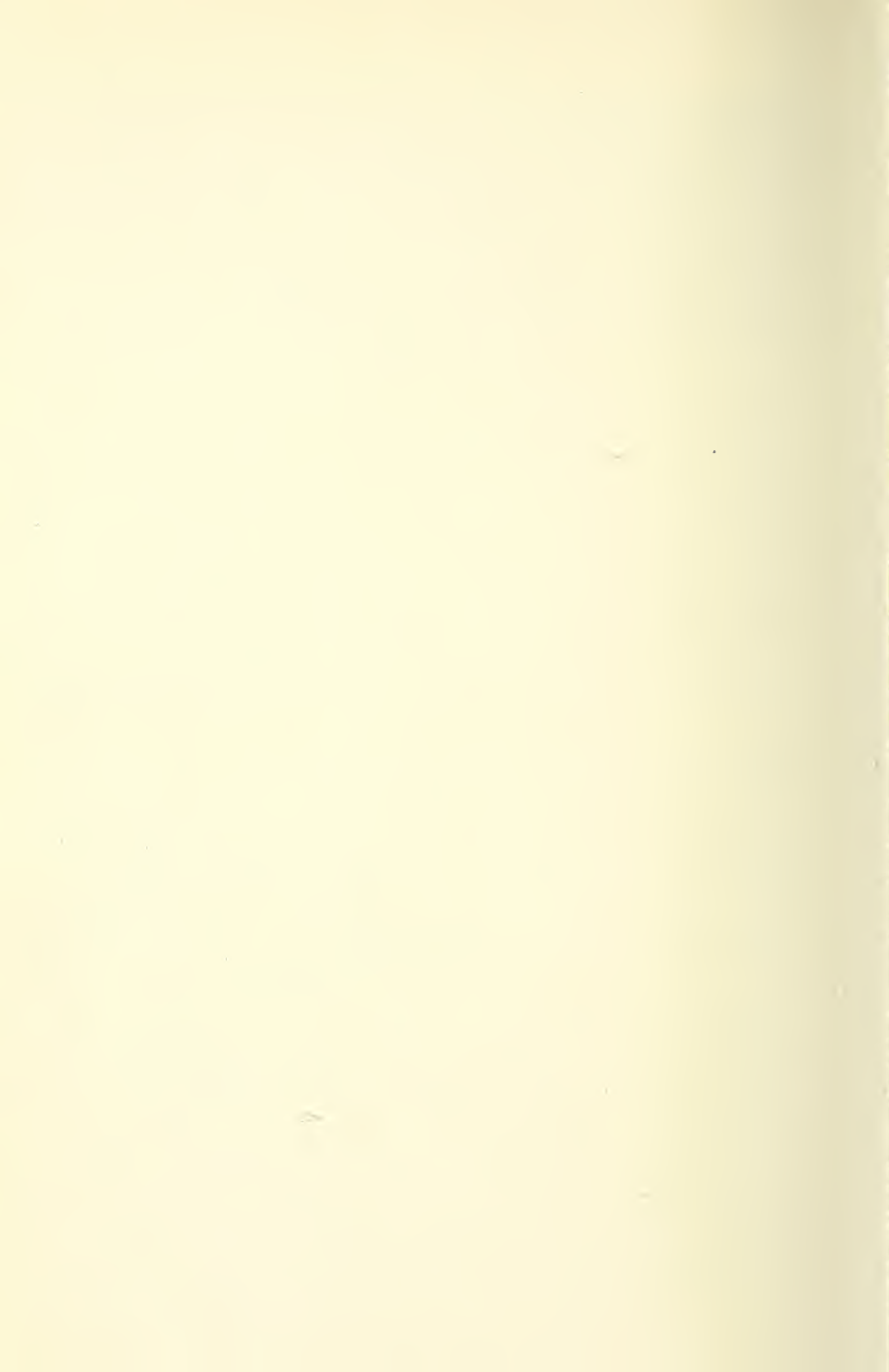
In anticipation of large congregations on that Sunday, two identical morning services — one at 9:45 and the other at 11 o'clock — were held. A feature of the services was a tribute to Miss Cornelia Withers Wilds upon her completion of 25 years of faithful service as church visitor. The daughter of Louis T. and Annie Edmunds Wilds, she was born in Longtown, S. C. She received the bachelor of arts degree from Winthrop College and the bachelor of religious education degree from the General Assembly's Training School. She served as Church Visitor in the First Presbyterian Church in Huntington, W. Va., and in 1926 was called to the Asheville First Church as Church Visitor and Youth Worker.

The congregation found that the beautiful sanctuary's Gothic lines were in harmony with the architecture of the exterior of the church building. The narthex was modernized. A center and two sides aisles (instead of the former two) were architecturally correct. Over the nave, there were large open beam wooden arches. The pulpit, at the south end of the chancel, was at a proper height so that the minister was in full view of the congregation. A lectern was at the opposite, or north, side of the chancel. The divided choir stall, in the rear of the chancel, was provided with a mirror that enabled those on the opposite side to see the choir director easily. The pews were of simple design, with foam-rubber cushions, and the concrete floor, overlaid with North Carolina flagstone in the aisles and rubber tile under the pews, was in keeping with the dignity of the whole design. The lighting fixtures, styled like antique lanterns, provided a soft golden illumination, and the hammered amber cathedral glass windows let in diffused light. The Theodore D. Morrison Memorial rose window in the east wall of the chancel had been designed and installed by foremost stained glass craftsmen, the Connick Studios of Boston.

The sermon was preached by Dr. Davis, whose subject was "The Glory of This House." With earnest eloquence, he said, "All our sacrifice and labor is for naught if the risen, living Lord be not present here. All this architectural beauty is in vain if from this pulpit the Word of God be not preached and the gospel of Jesus Christ be not proclaimed. 'Therefore I am determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.'

" 'God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of Christ.' For Christ is the glory of this House. If Christ crucified be lifted up in this church, then this House shall be a House of Prayer, a place where men worship God and get a new perspective, a place where men worship God and find in Him a refuge and strength, a place where the sinner is reconciled to his God and makes up with his Heavenly Father, then 'the glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts'."

Thus the year 1951 marked an important milestone in the history of the First Presbyterian Church of Asheville. With the first part of its new building work finished, the congregation looked forward to the completion of the entire program as an appealing and challenging opportunity to provide greater physical facilities for continuing on a larger scale the Christian service the church has rendered this community and region since pioneer days.





The First Presbyterian Church

ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

Sesquicentennial Celebration, December 2-9

1794 - 1951

Lest We Forget

By

C. R. SUMNER

THURSDAY AND FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6 and 7, 1951

EVENINGS AT 8:00 P. M.

LEST WE FORGET

NARRATOR *Richard Harshaw*

Episode I

LINK CARSON..... *William Hart, Jr.*

SMITH..... *Stanley Settle*

TAYLOR..... *Lawrence Widman, Jr.*

BENKIN..... *John Metzger*

BOBO..... *Walter Hurdt*

MICKEY LANYARD..... *Stanley Shaw*

JOHNSON..... *Don Hayden*

KELLY RENO..... *Jack Taggart*

REV. GEORGE NEWTON..... *Paul Murray*

BETSY RENO..... *Rita Sentz*

Episode II

LINK CARSON, SMITH, TAYLOR, BENKIN, BOBO,
MICKEY LANYARD, KELLY RENO, REV. GEORGE
NEWTON

BETSY RENO..... *Mary Jean Sentz*

TOWNSPEOPLE..... *Barbara Gambill, Nancy Priedeman,
Peggy Leonard, Brandon Glasgow, Don Hayden*

Episode III

NANCY..... *Pat Bailey*

CAPTAIN McDOWELL..... *Charles Parker, Jr.*

SUSIE..... *Mildred Matthews*

MISTY RAVENEL..... *Mrs. R. R. Williams, Jr.*

LIEUTENANT HARDY..... *William Estridge, Jr.*

ANNA WOODFIN.....	<i>Nancy Friedeman</i>
LILLIE WOODFIN.....	<i>Joy MacFadyen</i>
FANNIE PATTON.....	<i>Barbara Gambill</i>
KATE SMITH.....	<i>Peggy Leonard</i>

Episode IV

NURSE.....	<i>Betty C. George</i>
DR. W. F. P. HARDY.....	<i>N. E. Byers</i>
Dr. W. A. WOOD.....	<i>Dr. Claude Frazier</i>

Episode V

MORRISON.....	<i>James Howell</i>
WRIGHT.....	<i>J. M. Coleman</i>
LEE.....	<i>J. W. Byers</i>
BROWN.....	<i>L. B. Ordway</i>
ORR.....	<i>G. H. Ligon</i>
SMITH.....	<i>M. N. Coleman</i>
TAYLOR.....	<i>A. N. Barnett</i>
MURPHY.....	<i>Dana Burns</i>

Episode VI

MARY MASON.....	<i>Mrs. Lovell Smith</i>
GRANDPA.....	<i>J. E. Wilson</i>
JOHNNIE MASON.....	<i>Lovell Smith, Jr.</i>
RUTH MASON.....	<i>Betty C. George</i>
JIM MASON.....	<i>Lovell Smith</i>
READER.....	<i>Robert F. Campbell, Jr.</i>

DATE DUE

PRODUC

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LIGHTIN

Light C

PROPER

ORGANIS

Martha C

Pat Fespe

Harrold L

Mikell M

John Bridges

Frances Koon

London Glasgow

Lou Harshaw

y MacFadyen

A. Plummer

red Huntsman

David Beebe

bart Whitman

rier Davis, Jr.

erry Drum

ob McConnell

ohn Trotti

The st DEMCO 38-297

Homes for the
ited Daughters
of the Confederacy for the use of the guns from their collection.

At the conclusion of the drama the ushers will be at the exits to receive an offering to help defray the cost of the production of *Lest We Forget*.

HISTORY OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH *by George McCoy*

Mr. George McCoy has written a sixty-seven page history of the First Presbyterian Church which contains 11 pictures of the church and pastors of the church. This book was printed by Miller Printing Company and is made available to this congregation at the cost of printing; paper bound—\$1.00, cloth bound—\$1.50. This book may be purchased in the narthex of the church when the drama is ended.

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